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ABSTRACT

This teaching booklet on India is one in a series of four, developed within the framework of the Associated Schools Project of UNESCO with a view to promoting education for international understanding. The purpose is to enable students to learn more about the lifestyles of their peers in India--their school and family life, aspects of their cultural past, their preferences with regard to food, dress, literature, music, as well as their future aspirations. Divided into six chapters, chapter 1 presents "India: A Geographical Profile." Chapter 2, "Come Visit Our Country," contains a brief itinerary. Chapter 3, "Our Cultural Past," focuses on the ethnic composition of India's population and changes in political and economic life. Chapter 4 presents "Our Culture Today." In chapter 5, "Who Are We?" family, school, and community life are described. Chapter 6 examines "World Concerns" and considers the future of India. (EH)

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COME VISIT OUR COUNTRY

INDIA

Teaching material prepared within the framework of the UNESCO Associated Schools Project

SO 024 938

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1992

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The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of UNESCO.

'That ignorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war;'

Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Preamble

'... in its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs;' Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies

World Conference on Cultural Policies,
Mexico City, 26 July-6 August 1982

PREFACE

The study of other countries and cultures has always been one of the main priorities of the UNESCO Associated Schools Project (ASP) which was set up in 1953 with a view to promoting education for international understanding. Over the years, as the Project has grown from 33 institutions in 15 Member States to a major international network of over 2,500 schools in 101 countries in 1991, so has the number of activities aimed at promoting a better understanding and appreciation of other ways of life, customs and values.

At the pre-school and primary-school levels of education, similarities between the peoples of the world are often stressed. People worldwide have the same basic needs — food, shelter, health, love and solidarity — but these are often provided in many diverse ways and contribute to our rich cultural diversity.

At the secondary-school level of education, whilst similarities are not lost from sight, studies delve into a deeper awareness and understanding of the numerous and sometimes complex historical, geographical, human, economic, social and cultural factors which make each country so unique.

Furthermore, in studying about other countries and cultures at all levels of education, we are prompted to reflect upon and learn more about our own way of life.

In view of the interest and experience gained in intercultural learning, it is evident that institutions participating in ASP have important contributions to make towards the attainment of the objectives of the World Decade for Cultural Development (WDCD) 1988-1997 which can be summarized as follows:

acknowledgement of the cultural dimension of development;

affirmation and enrichment of cultural identities;

broadening participation in cultural life; and

promotion of international cultural co-operation.

Consequently, in an effort to enable young people to get to know each other better throughout the world, this new series of booklets entitled 'Come Visit Our Country' has been initiated with four countries: India, Morocco, Senegal and Sweden. Each booklet has been prepared, under contract with UNESCO by the National Commission for UNESCO in each country presented, in close collaboration with ASP students, teachers and educators, to whom UNESCO is most grateful. The guidelines for the booklets were elaborated by the UNESCO Secretariat and submitted for finalization to the Interregional Consultation on an Increased Multiplier Effect of the ASP (Bangkok, December 1988).

The booklets aim to enable young people to learn more about the life-styles of their peers in different parts of the world — their school and family life, aspects of their cultural past, their preferences with regard to food, dress, literature and music, as well as their future aspirations.

It is hoped that each booklet to be published throughout the decade will serve as a 'cultural bridge' enabling young people to come into closer contact with each other in order to

gain a deeper insight and appreciation of each other's rich cultural heritage and diversity. These cultural bridges should:

generate dialogue and closer communication as well as the exchange of ideas, concerns and aspirations for the future between the world's youth of today and the young adults of tomorrow;

shed new light on rapidly emerging cultural tendencies, similarities and common bonds among young people worldwide;

lead to closer contact between young people and facilitate reciprocal exchange visits between them; and

lay the foundation for real and lasting peace amongst the youth and peoples of the world.

CONTENTS

		Page
To the reader		1
I.	**India: A geographical profile**	5
II.	**Come visit our country**	13
	Brief itinerary	13
III.	**Our cultural past**	17
	The Indian subcontinent	17
	Ethnic composition of India's population	17
	Continuity in Indian culture	17
	From pre-history to the first civilization	18
	The Indo-Aryans and the Vedic age	19
	Changes in political and economic life and the rise of new religions	20
	Contacts with other cultures	20
	The classical age	21
	The medieval period	21
	The period of British rule	23
	The struggle for freedom	23
	Some outstanding Indians	24
IV.	**Our culture today**	27
	Languages	27
	Food, dress and customs	28
	Dance and music	29
	Tribal people	30
	Religion	30

Page

Major festivals 32

Outstanding personalities of modern times 34

V. Who are we? 39

Family, school and community life 40

Our favourites 49

VI. World concerns 57

The future 58

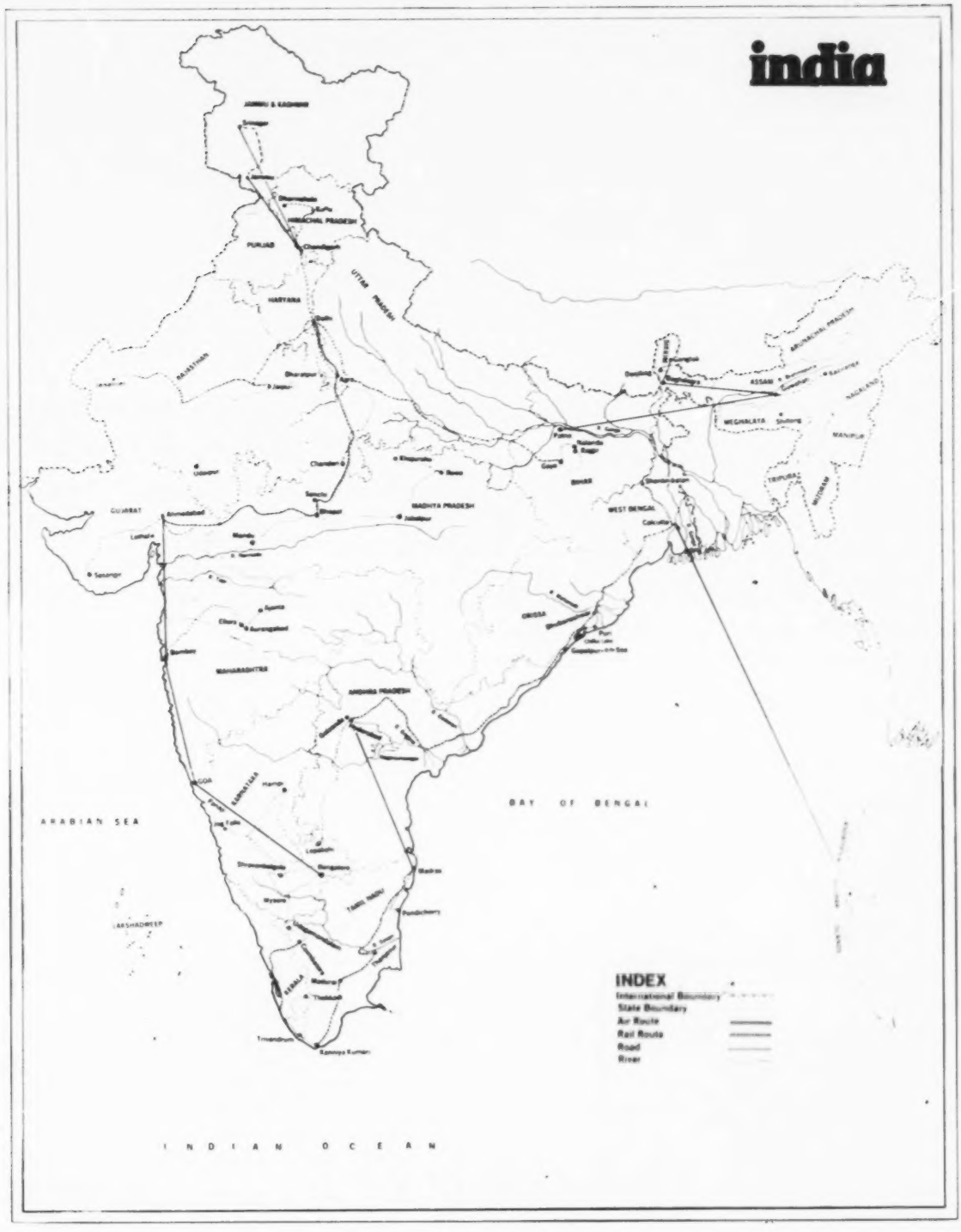
TO THE READER

It is possible that you already know something about our country — your teachers may have told you about India and its people; they may have recommended books to you on the subject; maybe your textbooks contain a chapter or two on our country; newspapers, television and cinema may also have helped you form an image of India. It is also possible that you have met Indians and asked them questions about their country and its customs.

Some of the things that you know, or may have heard or read, about India may not be entirely true. There are bound to be stories in circulation, partly true and partly imaginary, about a country so vast as India with its enormous varieties of styles of life and culture. Some of the books may also have been written in a hurry. Some author may have projected a point of view which, according to him or her, is more important than other points of view. The likelihood of a kind of confusion, if not distortion, of facts — of the real picture so to say — is always there no matter what the cause.

The problem as we see it is that it is not really easy to write, at a given time, a complete and comprehensive account of the reality that is India. The diversity, the variety and the complexity that characterize almost every aspect of India are so great that it is nearly impossible to encompass the totality in a single, unified and yet comprehensible picture.

However, in the following pages we have tried to present India in some of its aspects as we see it. We have done it with the hope that this would add, even though in small measure, to your understanding of our country. Happy reading.



Map of India showing States/Union territories, itinerary and places mentioned in the itinerary

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INDIA

Area	3,288,000 sq km
Population	844,324,222
Population density	267 inhabitants per sq km
Capital	New Delhi
Other major cities	Bombay, Calcutta, Madras
Longest river	Brahmaputra* (2,900 km)
Official language of the Union**	Hindi
Main religions	Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism
National holidays	26 January, Republic Day; 15 August, Independence Day; 2 October, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday
Main exports	Tea, ready-made garments, engineering goods, handicrafts, iron ore
Main imports	Petroleum products, pearls and precious stones, capital goods, edible oils
Currency	Indian Rupee (Rs.)

* The longest river inside Indian territory is the Ganga (2,510 km).

** English is the associate official language of the Union. Every State has its own official language(s).

I. INDIA: A GEOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

India is the home of one of the most ancient civilizations of the world. The name of the country is associated with the great river Sind — also known as Sindhu and Indus. The ancient Persians, and later the Arabs, called the country Hind after the river Sind. The ancient Greeks called it Inde from which the English word 'India' is derived. Our country is also called 'Bharat' after the name of an ancient Indian tribe. Since the Middle Ages, another name of our country has been Hindustan.

In earlier times, 'India' included a number of modern nations of today India (Bharat), Pakistan and Bangladesh. Today it refers to the country which emerged as an independent nation on 15 August 1947. It comprises the Indian mainland and a number of islands forming two major chains — the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (of volcanic origin) in the Bay of Bengal and the Lakshadweep islands (of coral origin) in the Arabian Sea.

Location, shape and size

India is well connected by major air and sea routes of the world. You can reach our country very easily from any part of the world. You can also travel by land, though it may be slightly difficult. This is because of the lofty mountain ranges in the north. There are, however, a few openings here and there — passes, gorges and valleys providing routes for travel. India has had contacts with other parts of the world, for exchange of ideas and of goods, through these routes. In modern days, all-weather roads have been built following some of the natural openings.

Located to the north of the Equator and east of the Prime Meridian, India occupies the south-central peninsula of the Asian continent. It is roughly heart-shaped. While its northern part is broader, the southern part gets narrower and narrower. This tapering of the Indian peninsula into the northern part of the Indian Ocean has divided the oceanic realm into two parts — the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. So vast and extensive is our country that it is often described as a subcontinent. Spread over nearly 3.3 million square kilometres, it almost equals Western Europe. There are only six other countries in the world — Russian Federation, Canada, China, the United States, Brazil and Australia — which are larger in size than our country.

Physical features

Besides its vastness, our country is also characterized by a great diversity in its physical features. In the extreme north, there are several mountain ranges which radiate from the 'roof of the world' — the Pamirs. The Karakoram mountains stretch between the Pamir Knot into the north-west and the Indus in Jammu and Kashmir in the south-east. K^2, the world's second highest peak, belongs to this mountain range. The Himalayan mountain ranges are bounded by the river Indus in the west and the river Brahmaputra in the east. Broadly, they consist of three parallel ranges. From north to south they are the Himadri or the Greater Himalaya, the Himachal or the Middle Himalaya, and the Siwaliks or the Outer Himalaya. The Himadri is the highest of all and contains some of the highest mountain peaks of the world. Mount Everest, the highest mountain peak of the world (located in Nepal), and Kanchenjunga (the highest mountain peak of the Himalaya in India) belong to this range. In between these mountain ranges, there are deep valleys, deep gorges and elevated plateau surfaces. Several perennial rivers of the north have their source in the Himalayas.

The towering mountain ranges overlook the great Indo-Gangetic plain, stretching in an area from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal. This plain is drained by the mighty rivers Indus, Ganga and Brahmaputra along with their tributaries. The rivers Ganga and Brahmaputra join together in their lower reaches before falling into the Bay of Bengal. The delta formed by these two rivers is the largest delta in the world. It is one of the most extensive and fertile plains in the world.

The Western and the Eastern Ghats

To the south of the Great Indian plains lies the old landmass of the peninsular India. This plateau region is made up of hard igneous and metamorphic rocks which contain large deposits of several minerals. It is drained by the rivers Narmada, Tapi, Godawari, Krishna and Kaveri. The plateau has a very sharp edge all along the west. It consists of several hill ranges. They are together called the Western Ghats. While the northern part of the plateau merges gently with the Indo-Gangetic plain, the slope in the south is towards the east. The eastern edge of the plateau is less marked and is widely broken. This discontinuous row of hills is collectively called the Eastern Ghats.

The plateau in the northern part is bounded by the hill ranges of the Aravalli. These ranges are the relics of the old mountain ranges. Beyond these ranges to the west lies the Desert of Rajasthan. It is made up of rocks and sand. For hundreds of kilometres you can see nothing but sand. This desert extends further into Pakistan. To the west and east of the southern part of the plateau, there are coastal plains. The eastern coastal plain is comparatively wider. The total coastline of India is about 6,000 kilometres. In some parts it is indented providing sites for natural harbours.

Climate

The climate of India, like the relief features, also varies greatly. When the mountainous regions of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh have snowfall in winter, people in the south continue to feel quite comfortable in light cotton. During summer, when people in the northern plains have to bear the oppressive heat, warm clothing is still required in the higher reaches of the mountains. Similarly, some parts of the country have heavy rainfall, while some have rains once in a few years. Thus there are great variations in temperature and rainfall patterns in the country. We have three main seasons: winter, summer and the rainy season. Cold weather season begins in mid-November. December and January are usually the coldest months in the northern part of the country. From March to May, it is summer. Temperature remains quite high and at some places it goes as high as 45°C. Rainfall in India is associated mainly with the monsoon winds. The inflow of south-west monsoon by the first week of June brings the first rain. With the onset of rains, temperature starts falling. There may, however, be brief periods during the rainy season when there is no rain. Heat is quite oppressive during this period because humidity is high. Rainfall is highest on the west coast and in the north-east. The Indian subcontinent receives its bulk of rainfall during this season. We eagerly wait for the rains to come and cool the parched earth.

Due to abundance of sunshine and plenty of rainfall, we are able to grow a variety of crops and fruits in our country. Rice is the main cereal crop grown in the river valleys and plains and it forms the staple food crop of the people living in these areas.

Population

Our country is the second most populous country in the world. With a population of about 840 million, it is next only to China. But distribution of population within the country is not even. For example, in 1981, the densities varied from seven persons per sq km in Arunachal Pradesh (a mountainous region) to 654 persons per sq km in Kerala.

The population of India is composed of various ethnic groups but through continuous contacts over thousands of years, different ethnic groups have merged with one another imperceptibly.

In our country, we have people following a number of different religions — Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Judaism and Zoroastrianism. Thus every major world religion has its following in India.

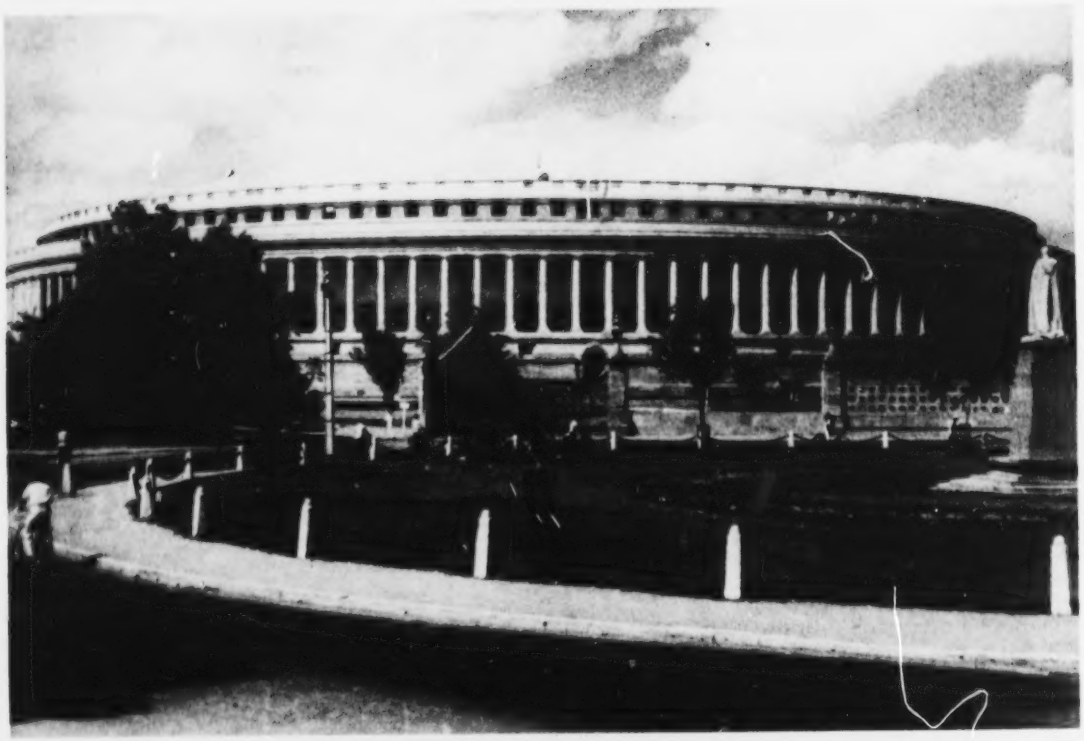
Languages

Hundreds of languages are spoken in our country. Of these, 18 languages have been specified in the Constitution of India. Hindi is the official language of the Union and English the associate official language. Each of the major languages is the dominant language of one region or the other and is also, generally, the official language of the State. Hindi is the official language of a number of States. Most of these languages have influenced one another and their speakers are spread throughout the country. This multiplicity of languages must be baffling to people in those countries that have only one language. We are quite proud of this multiplicity as it adds to the variety of our culture. Those of us who go to school and study up to the secondary stage learn three languages, which generally include Hindi as well as English. In our country, even those who cannot read and write can speak and understand more than one language.

The Constitution

Our country had come under British colonial rule in the later half of the eighteenth century. We won our independence on 15 August 1947. Subsequently, the representatives of our people framed a Constitution and India was declared a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic. Our country has since then been a parliamentary democracy. We have our governments at two levels — State and Union (or Central) — both formed by, and responsible to, the elected representatives of the people.

Besides laying down the framework of the government, our Constitution specifies the fundamental rights and fundamental duties of the citizens of India. The basic principles which should guide the State in the formulation and implementation of policies are also defined in the Constitution. Freedom of worship and belief, and freedom to preserve and develop their languages and cultures are guaranteed to all citizens. No religion is favoured or discriminated against. India is a Union of States and the powers of the Union (Central) government and State governments are specified. This has facilitated the preservation and nurturing the variety of our culture.



Parliament House, New Delhi

Our national anthem and national flag

The national anthem of our country is taken from a song which was composed by Rabindranath Tagore in the early years of the twentieth century. The text of the national anthem along with its English translation is given below:

Jana-gana-mana-adhinayaka, jaya he

Bharata-bhagya-vidhata.

Punjaba-Sindhu-Gujrata-Maratha-

Dravida-Utkala-Banga

Vindhya-Himachala-Yamuna-Ganga

Uchhala-Jaladhi-taranga.

Tava subha name jage,

tava subha asisa mage,

gahe tava jaya-gatha,

Jana-gana-mangala-dayaka jaya he

Bharata-bhagya-vidhata.

Jaya he, jaya he, jaya he,

jaya jaya jaya, jaya he.

Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people,

dispenser of India's destiny.

Thy name rouses the hearts of Punjab, Sind, Gujarat and

Maratha,

Of the Dravida and Orissa and Bengal;

It echoes in the hills of Vindhyas and Himalayas,

mingles in the music of Jamuna and Ganges

and is chanted by the waves of the Indian Sea.

They pray for thy blessings and sing thy praise.

The saving of all people waits in thy hand,

thou dispenser of India's destiny.

Victory, victory, victory to thee.

Our national flag is popularly called the Tricolour. It evolved during the period when our ancestors were fighting for the freedom of the country. It is rectangular in shape, and the ratio of its length and width is three to two. It has three horizontal strips of equal size, with top strip in deep saffron, the middle strip in white and the bottom strip in deep green. In the centre of the white strip is a wheel (Chakra) with 24 spokes. The wheel is in navy-blue.

The currency

The currency of our country is the Indian Rupee. The minimum denomination is one Paisa. One hundred Paise make one Rupee. We have coins for one, two, five, ten, 20, 25 and 50 Paise and one, two and five Rupees. Our currency notes are of one, two, five, ten, 20, 50, 100 and 500 denominations. Indian currency can be exchanged with other currencies of the world at banks which are authorized for the purpose. The exchange rates, as in other currencies, vary from time to time. At present, the exchange rate for the United States dollar is approximately Rs. 30.

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100
RESERVE BANK OF INDIA
GUARANTEED BY THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
OTE 653543
एक सौ टंका
ಒಂದು ನೂರು ರೂಪಾಯಿ
ഒരു നൂറു രൂപ
ശതം രൂപകാണി
ನೂರು ರುಪಾಯಿ
ನೂರು ರೂಪಾಯಲು
ಸೌ ರೂಪಾಯಿ
ಒಂದು ನೂರು ರೂಪಾಯಿ
ನೂರು ರೂಪಾಯಿ
ನೂರು ರೂಪಾಯಿ

II. COME VISIT OUR COUNTRY

We have selected a few places from every region of our country that we would like you to visit. The list includes places of historical and cultural importance, of natural and scenic beauty, and wild life sanctuaries and national parks. These places are indicated in the map along with a very rough kind of itinerary. Visiting the places that we have listed would require a long holiday. You can select places to suit your special interests. You can even decide to just go round the country without any specific interest in mind and simply experience the rich variety in landscape, dress and costume, food, uniform and ways of living, arts and crafts, languages, music, dance and festivals.

Almost all the major cities of India are connected by air and by a railway system which is the fourth longest in the world. You can also travel by road, of which India has a large network; most of our highways are quite good. Thus travel in India is quite easy even when the distances are very long.

Delhi and Bombay are the two major international airports in India and if you decide to fly to India, we would prefer you to first come to Delhi. You can fly to Delhi from any part of the world. If you travel by land, you can enter India from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Brief itinerary

I. Delhi and around: Delhi is the capital of our country and one of the oldest cities of India. The monuments of Delhi — Old Fort, Qutb Minar, Hazrat Nizamuddin, Humayun's Tomb, Red Fort, Jama Masjid and numerous others — will give you a glimpse of India's history during the past 1,000 years. The Qutb Minar — a tall impressive tower built in the early thirteenth century which you might see from the air a few minutes before your plane lands at Delhi airport — is a major landmark of Delhi. There are many impressive buildings built during the British rule — the India Gate and what are now India's Parliament and Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's House). The National Museum, the National Archives, a number of art galleries and theatres, and a zoo are also located here. There are memorials to Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, two of our greatest national leaders, which millions of people visit to pay their homage. You can also see the handicrafts of all parts of India in some of the shopping centres.

From Delhi, you can travel to some of the following places: Agra — for the Agra Fort and the Taj Mahal, which no one should miss; Fatehpur Sikri, a city built by the Mughal emperor Akbar as his capital, with many fine monuments; Varanasi, a holy city for Hindus; Bharatpur bird sanctuary where, in winter, you can see birds which come from Siberia and other far away places; Jaipur, the Pink city built about 300 years ago; Ajmer, an important centre of pilgrimage for Muslims and Hindus; Udaipur, the city of lakes and palaces with Chittorgarh, one of India's oldest and greatest forts, not far away from there; Jaisalmer, a town in the midst of the desert, famous for a beautiful fort and a colourful desert festival; Chandigarh, a city planned by the famous architect Le Corbusier; Amritsar, the city where the Golden Temple, the Sikhs' most important holy place, as well as the Jallianwala Bagh, the place where the most brutal massacre of Indians ordered by a British general took place in 1919, are located; the hill resorts of Kulu — Manali and Kashmir valley known for their scenic beauty, orchards, gardens and handicrafts; and Leh in Ladakh, a place of breathtaking beauty and a centre of Buddhism, which is also one of the highest habitations in the world.

Back to Delhi and from there to Bhopal

II. Bhopal and around: Bhopal was founded in the eleventh century and is now the capital of the State of Madhya Pradesh. The city has an ancient temple and many beautiful mosques. The famous Bharat Bhavan, an important centre for arts, is also located here. From Bhopal, you can travel to: Bhimbetka, a site where cave paintings of the palaeolithic age can be seen; Sanchi, where one of the most beautiful and the most ancient Buddhist stupas is located; Mandu, a fortified city of medieval times with remains of a unique style of architecture, also famed in history for its sixteenth-century musician king and his musician queen; Khajuraho, for its eleventh-century temples with exquisite craftsmanship; Jabalpur, for the Dhuandhar Falls on the river Narmada and the marble rocks through which the river cuts its way; and the Kanha tiger sanctuary.

Back to Bhopal and from there to Ahmedabad

III. Ahmedabad and around: Ahmedabad was founded in the fifteenth century by the Sultans of Gujarat as their capital. Some of the finest mosques in India with their unique features, are located here. Mahatma Gandhi built his Sabarmati Ashram here. The new capital of the State of Gujarat — Gandhinagar is at a distance of a few kilometres from Ahmedabad. You can travel from Ahmedabad to Lothal which was one of the major centres of the Harappa culture — the remains of the dockyard can still be seen — and Sasangir, a wildlife sanctuary, particularly famous for the Asiatic lion.

Back to Ahmedabad and from there to Bombay

IV. Bombay and around: Bombay is India's most important commercial and industrial centre and is the capital of the State of Maharashtra. It had been a Portuguese possession for some time and had been given away by the Portuguese to the king of England as a part of the dowry. The city has some of the finest architecture of the British period. About an hour's journey by boat will take you to the famous Elephanta caves with their beautiful sculpture. From Bombay, you can go to: Aurangabad from where you should visit the Ajanta Caves, famous throughout the world particularly for its ancient murals; Ellora, especially its rock-cut Kailasanath, and Deogiri (Daulatabad), one of the unique forts in India; and to Goa formerly a Portuguese colony, which has some of the greatest churches and some of the most beautiful beaches.

From Goa to Bangalore

V. Bangalore and around: Bangalore, perhaps the most beautiful Indian city, is the capital of the State of Karnataka. From Bangalore, one can go to: Shravanabelgola, which has the famous statue of Bahubali, a saint of Jainism; Mysore, a city of palaces and temples, once the capital of Tipu Sultan, the eighteenth-century Indian ruler who gave the most heroic resistance to the British; Jog Falls, one of the highest water falls in the world; Belur, Halebid and Hampi, which have the historical remains of some of the most magnificent temples and palaces; and Udhagamandalam (Ooty), hill resort, via Mudumalai, a wild life sanctuary.

From Udhagamandalam to Trivandrum via Coimbatore

VI. Trivandrum and around: Trivandrum is the capital of the State of Kerala. The people of Kerala — Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jains — are among the most enterprising in India. The place where Vasco da Gama, the European who discovered the sea-route to

India, first landed is located in Kerala. A few kilometres from the city is Kovalam, one of the most beautiful beaches in India. From Trivandrum one can go to: the Periyar game sanctuary; Kanniyakumari, the southernmost tip of the India subcontinent where the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean meet; Madurai and Thanjavur, where some of the most ancient and beautiful temples in south Indian style of architecture are located; Pondicherry, formerly one of the French colonial possessions in India, famous for the Auroville; and Madras, the capital of the State of Tamil Nadu, and famous for its ancient temples and churches, the Saint Thomas Mount and the Marina Beach, and not far away from Madras the city of Kanchipuram, famous for its temples and for its silk, and Mahabalipuram for its rock temples.

From Madras to Hyderabad

VII. Hyderabad and around: Hyderabad is the capital of the State of Andhra Pradesh. Some of the famous historical monuments in this city are the Char Minar, Makkah Masjid and tombs of the rulers of the Qutb Shahi dynasty. Some of the places to go to from Hyderabad are: Lepakshi, for its sixteenth century temple; Golconda Fort; and Nagarjunasagar Dam, the world's tallest masonry dam, built on an ancient Buddhist site — like the sites of ancient Egyptian temples which were submerged by the Aswan Dam, this Buddhist site was removed brick by brick and re-created on an island in the Nagarjunasagar.

From Hyderabad to Bhubaneshwar

VIII. Bhubaneshwar and around: Bhubaneshwar is the capital of the State of Orissa. It is a city of many ancient temples. Not far from the city is one of the famous rock edicts of Emperor Ashoka who had renounced war after his conquest of this region. From Bhubaneshwar one can go to: Konark, famous for its magnificent Sun temple; Puri, for its temple and a beautiful beach; Chilka Lake and a bird sanctuary; and Gopalpur-on-Sea, famous for its beaches.

From Bhubaneshwar to Calcutta

IX. Calcutta and around: Calcutta, India's most populous city, is the capital of the State of West Bengal and is regarded by many as the most important centre of cultural life in India. It is the only Indian city which has an underground railway (metro) as well as the old-fashioned trams. Its most well-known monument is the Victoria Memorial built in the early years of this century. From Calcutta, you can go to: Shantiniketan where Visvabharati — the university founded by Rabindranath Tagore — is located; the Sundarbans, the world's biggest estuarine forest and a tiger reserve; Gangtok, capital of the State of Sikkim, a place of exquisite natural beauty, from where you can see the peaks of the Kanchenjunga which look golden with the first rays of the sun, where you can see some of the most beautiful orchids in the world and one of the most important Buddhist monasteries in India; Guwahati, capital of the State of Assam from where you can go to the Kaziranga wild life sanctuary; and to Shillong, capital of the State of Meghalaya, a picturesque hill resort.

From Calcutta to Patna

X. Patna and around: Patna, capital of the State of Bihar, is one of the most ancient cities in India. Its history goes back to about 2,500 years ago. From here you can go to: Rajgir, a centre of Buddhist pilgrimage; Nalanda, the site of an ancient Buddhist university; and

Bodhgaya, another centre of Buddhist pilgrimage having Burmese, Tibetan, Chinese, Thai and Japanese monasteries.

Back to Delhi

The list of places that we have prepared is perhaps too long. We have tried to be very selective but keeping in view the sheer size of the country and its physical and cultural diversity, a shorter list would have made the selection partial, if not misleading.

III. OUR CULTURAL PAST

The Indian subcontinent

The present boundaries of our country were fixed when we became an independent nation. However, when we study our cultural past, we have to study a somewhat larger area which we call the Indian subcontinent, sometimes including Afghanistan also. We do this purely for historical understanding. Geographically, the Indian subcontinent is a well-defined unit, separated from the rest of the world by high mountains and seas. Because of this, India's cultural and historical development has always had a high degree of independence and distinct identity.

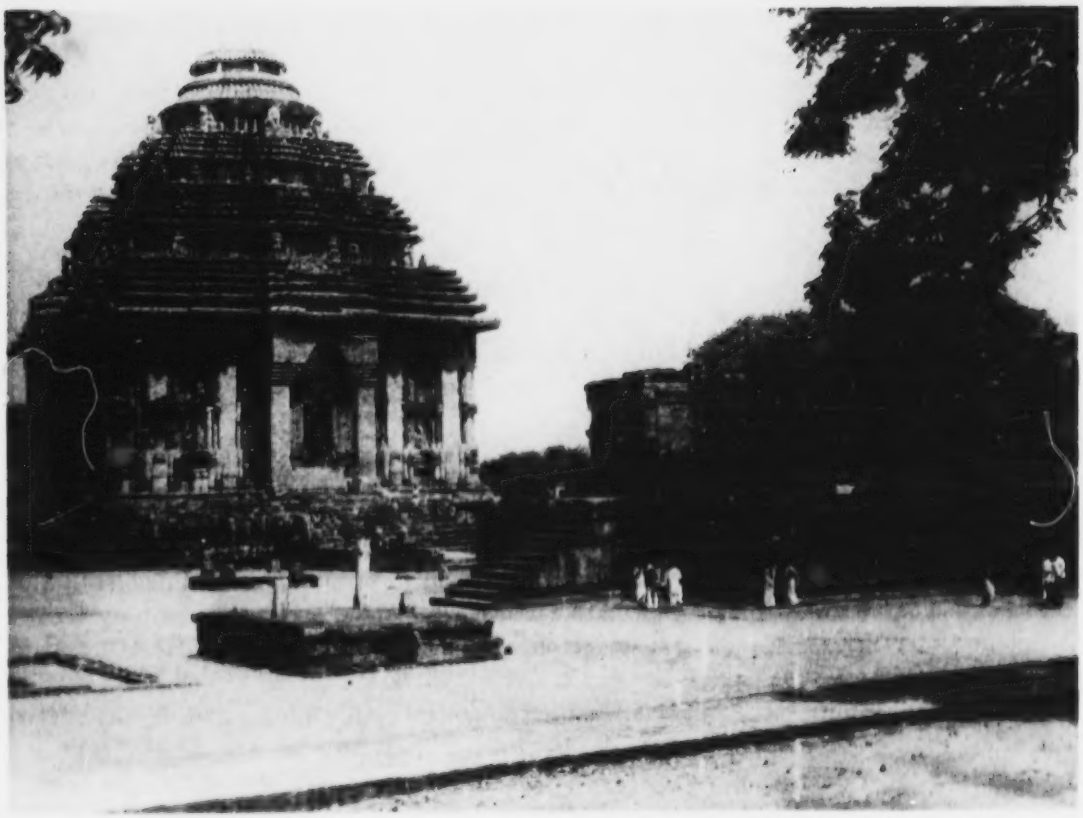
Since very early times, the movement of people between India and various parts of the world has been going on across the seas and overland through the mountain passes. Within the country, the mountain ranges and the river systems have facilitated the emergence of distinct cultural regions, without isolating one region from the other.

Ethnic composition of India's population

Our ancestors were drawn from almost all the 'racial' and ethnic stocks of humankind, although perhaps none of them can be recognized in their so-called 'pure' form today. They include the proto-Australoids, who were perhaps the earliest migrants to India. the palaeo-Mediterraneans, the Caucasoids, the Mongoloids and the Negroids. During the past 5,000 years or so, the ethnic groups which made India their home included the Indo-Aryans (a branch of the Indo-European speaking people), the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Shakas, the Pahlavas, the Kushans, the Huns, the Arabs, the Turks, the Mongols, the Africans and, in more recent centuries, the people from various parts of Europe. They have all intermingled with one another over the millennia and we, the inhabitants of India today, are the descendants of all of them in their varying degrees of intermingling. All of them brought with them their own cultural traditions and contributed to the making of India's culture. Because of these reasons, India's cultural development has been marked by great diversity and variety. It has never been monolithic and homogeneous. We generally refer to it as a *composite* culture or culture of *unity in diversity*.

Continuity in Indian culture

Throughout our history, there have been many changes in our culture, sometimes very fast and at other times very slow. But these changes have neither been uniform throughout the country nor have they marked a complete break with the culture of the preceding period. New elements have either been assimilated or have further enriched our variety and diversity. For example, in religious life, some of the practices which first arose about 4,500 years ago are still followed by many people and the hymns which were composed over 3,000 years ago are recited at various ceremonies. On the other hand, many elements of Buddhism which had arisen as a new religion became a part of Hinduism as it evolved while Buddhism itself declined. Islam, on the other hand, which arose outside India, won millions of followers in India and continued to be a distinct religion though, at the same time, some of the religious practices followed by Muslims in India are distinctly Indian.



Sun Temple at Konark

From pre-history to the first civilization

The Stone Age in India dates back to about 400,000 years ago and we know about this from our archaeologists who have found stone tools made by early man. Evidence of the New Stone Age, which marked the beginning of farming, comes from a few sites in north-western parts of the subcontinent. This dated back to about 7,000 years ago. In the 1920s, archaeologists made a great discovery. They started excavating the mounds which they had found, first in Harappa and then in Moenjodaro and soon uncovered the remains of two very ancient cities. These discoveries marked the beginning of our knowledge about a new civilization which had arisen in India about 4,500 years ago (or 2,500 BC). Subsequently, hundreds of other sites of this civilization spread over a vast area of the north-western parts of the subcontinent were discovered. These sites have been found in Baluchistan, Sind and West Punjab in Pakistan and Rajasthan, Gujarat, western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and East Punjab in India. This civilization is known as the Indus Valley Civilization, or simply the Harappa Culture after the first site which was discovered at Harappa.

This civilization, with which the history of Indian culture and civilization begins, had some very remarkable features. The most remarkable of these was town planning and civic amenities. The wide straight streets with blocks of many-storied houses on either side cut across one another at right angles, as in a grid. Every house had a courtyard and a bathroom. There was a remarkable system of drainage. The street drains which were covered with burnt bricks or slabs of stone carried away rainwater and sewage from the houses. No other contemporary civilization and not many cities until the modern times had anything comparable to the drainage system of the Harappans.

Our knowledge of this civilization, one of the earliest known civilizations in human history, is based entirely on the material objects of this civilization which have been found. They knew the art of writing and the signs of their writing — which look like pictures like the earliest known writings of other contemporary civilizations — are inscribed on the beautiful seals which they produced. However, their writing has not yet been read, or deciphered. Because of this there are many things about this civilization about which we know nothing. For example, we do not know what language the makers of this first Indian civilization spoke.

By about 1,700 BC, this civilization came to an end. We do not know why and how, although there are many theories about it. All the cities of this civilization fell into decay and were totally forgotten. No ancient book referred to them and the world remained totally ignorant of their existence until, about 3,700 years later, the archaeologists excavated the mounds and uncovered the ruins. But for about a thousand years after the decline of these cities, there were no cities and no urban living in any part of the Indian subcontinent.

The Indo-Aryans and the Vedic age

Until the discovery of the Harappa culture, the coming of the Aryans in about 1,500 BC was taken to be the starting-point of Indian history and civilization. The Aryans were primarily a pastoral people, unfamiliar with the art of urban living. Their language was Sanskrit which is a language of the Indo-European family of languages. We know about the life and beliefs of the early Aryans, not from the material objects that they left behind but from their literature. The earliest of these was the *Rig Veda* which was composed by about 1,000 BC It is a collection of hymns in praise of gods such as Indra, the god of war, Agni, the god of fire, Surya, the sun god and many others, and a few goddesses which included the goddess of the dawn and the goddess of the night. The *Rig Veda* is one of the earliest, if not *the* earliest, compositions in any Indo-European language. It is interesting to remember that this work was put down to writing over a thousand years after it was composed. Scholars tell us that it was carefully transmitted orally from generation to generation without any change. There are three other Vedas which were composed later and various other works of religious and philosophical nature. The Vedas are considered sacred texts by the Hindus and the Vedic hymns are still recited by them as prayers and on social occasions. The chanting or recitation of the Vedic hymns has a musical quality and is an art by itself.

The period which began after the coming of the Aryans till about seventh century BC is known as the Vedic age. This age marked a major turning-point in the history of India culture. In the course of time, many Vedic ideas and practices spread throughout the country. A new type of system of dividing society emerged in this period. This was the caste system which divided people into higher and lower castes. A person's position in society was determined at the time of birth and it was impossible for a person born into one caste to move to another. Later, a very obnoxious element was added to this system. This was the practice of

untouchability. Some people were thought to be so lowly that even the sight of them was considered a source of pollution. However, it may be remembered that all pre-modern societies were marked by gross social inequalities. In many ancient civilizations, such as those of Greece and Rome, the people who did most of the productive work were slaves. The kind of brutality and exploitation associated with slavery was unknown in India. The caste system, in the course of time, spread all over India and became the main form of organizing society throughout the country. Many changes took place in this system over the centuries but it continued to be the dominant feature of Indian society for over two thousand years. It began to lose its hold only in modern times.

Changes in political and economic life and the rise of new religions

Many significant changes took place in various aspects of India's historical and cultural development during the period from the sixth to third century BC The political system of the Vedic period was mainly tribal in character. Later, a number of States emerged in different parts of the country. Most of these States were kingdoms and some were republics. In the last quarter of the fourth century BC, the first empire — the Maurya empire — emerged which politically united almost the entire subcontinent. A number of towns and cities, mainly as centres of crafts and trade, emerged in different parts of the country.

City life had thus begun once again after a lapse of about a thousand years.

Two major new religions emerged in India during this period. These were Buddhism and Jainism. Like the Vedic religion, these two religions also spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. Both arose in protest against some aspects of the Vedic religion, particularly the sacrifices which were a part of the Vedic religious observances and the domination of the priests. Non-injury to living beings or what in India is called *ahimsa*, and good conduct rather than rituals were central to the doctrines of both. Buddhism became a major world religion in later centuries. In India it left a deep impact on every aspect of culture. Much of the best art of ancient India was directly inspired by Buddhism.

This period also marked the beginning of Indian art. The finest specimens of this art are the polished stone pillars erected by Ashoka, a Maurya emperor of third century BC. On these pillars, and on rocks, which were spread all over India, Ashoka's edicts were inscribed. In these edicts he asked the people to follow Righteousness or what he called *dhamma*. After a terrible war, which he won, he renounced war as State policy — perhaps the first ruler in history to do so. We consider Ashoka to be a true symbol of the culture of India with its stress on peace and harmony. Our national emblem is taken from the capital of an Ashokan pillar.

An event during this period which had important consequences for Indian culture in the subsequent period was Alexander's invasion of India. Alexander is famous as one of the greatest conquerors in world history. His invasion was confined to parts of north-western India — his soldiers refused to move further into India and he died on his way back from India. The invasion had little political significance for India. But this was for the first time that Indians came into direct contact with the Greeks. During the following period, these contacts grew and helped in the further enrichment of Indian culture.

Contacts with other cultures

The period from about second century BC to about third century AD was one of very close contacts with a number of other cultures. A number of dynasties of non-Indian origin — the

Indo-Greeks, the Shakas, the Parthians and the Kushans and some others — ruled over parts of northern and western India. This was also the period of the emergence of States in the Deccan and southern India. Most of them had close trade relations with areas as far away as the Roman empire. These contacts played a crucial role in the flowering of various aspects of culture. The first great schools of art, particularly Buddhist art, each with its distinctive style, flourished during this period. One of these schools shows a marked influence of the art of Greece and Rome. Indian astronomy, medicine and, according to some scholars, even drama were enriched by contacts with the Greeks. Most of the 'foreigners' who made India their home during this period adopted one or other Indian religion or religious sect and became patrons of art, science and learning. The greatest of them was the Kushan King Kanishka. The Saka Era, which is India's National Calendar, is believed to have started with him. These five centuries were also the best period for the growth of crafts, towns and cities, and trade with other parts of the world.

Towards the later part of this period and in the following centuries, Christianity and Judaism were introduced in India. Saint Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Christ, is believed to have come to India. A tomb, believed to be Saint Thomas' tomb, is located in Madras, in southern India. India also came into contact with Zoroastrianism and, later, a large number of followers of this religion, called the Parsis, came to India and settled here.

The classical age

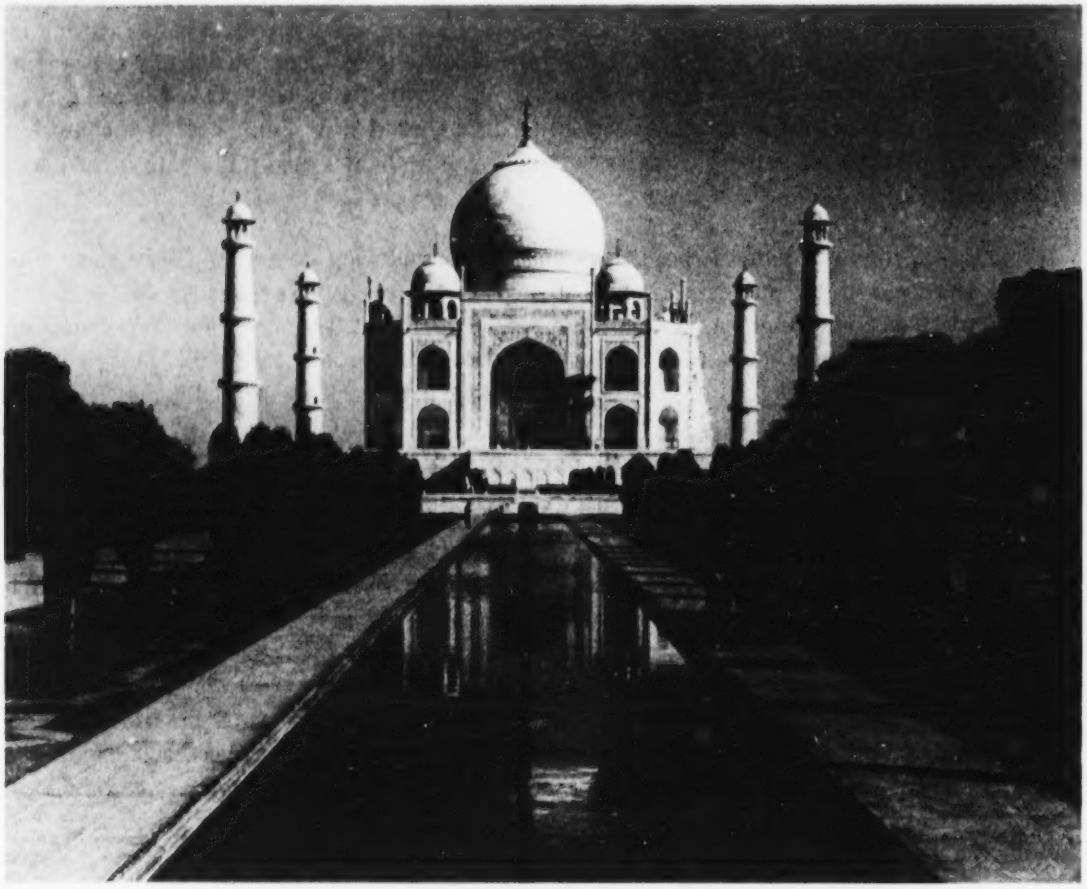
The period from the fourth to the sixth centuries of the Christian era is considered by many historians as India's classical age. Most of the literary — both religious and secular — compositions, including the epics — the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* — of the preceding 1,500 years or so were put down to writing during this period. Indians made significant achievements in astronomy, medicine and mathematics. One of these achievements was the numeral system, with the use of zero, which spread throughout the world in the subsequent centuries as Arabic numerals. This period is also significant for its art and literature. Most of the paintings of the Ajanta caves, famous throughout the world, and Kalidasa, ancient India's most renowned literary figure, belong to this period. Many religious beliefs and practices associated with Hinduism, including the beginning of temples, can also be traced back to this period.

The medieval period

The next six hundred years from the seventh to the twelfth century, saw the emergence of a number of different styles in art, architecture, and the beginning of the languages that are spoken by the Indian people today. Of the modern Indian languages, the most ancient is Tamil. The first literary writings in this language can be traced back to the early centuries of the Christian era. This was the greatest period of temple building in India, each region developing its distinct style. Some of the finest examples of temples built during this period are the Brihadeswara temple in Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, the Sun temple of Konark in Orissa, the Khajuraho temples in Madhya Pradesh and Dilwara in Rajasthan. In religion, this period marks the coming into India of a new religion — Islam.

Politically, the period from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century was one of domination by the Turks and the Mughals, who brought together for sometime almost the entire country under their rule. This was also one of the most significant periods in India's cultural development. Besides the coming of Islam, the period saw the growth of art,

architecture and literature. India's contacts with Central Asian and Persian cultural traditions led to the flowering of Indian culture. New forms of architecture developed as a result of the mingling of ancient Indian, Central Asian and Persian traditions. The use of the arch and the dome became widespread, and new styles of ornamentation came into vogue.



Taj Mahal, Agra

The greatest architectural monument of this period is the Taj Mahal. Most of the languages that we speak today developed and became media of literature during this period. Two new languages — Arabic and Persian — entered India. While Arabic, along with the ancient Indian language, Sanskrit, became a language of theology and learning, Persian was the language of administration and of new forms of literature. Some of the historical writings and literary works of this period hold a place of pride in the history of Persian literature. Among the most notable writers of Persian were Amir Khusrau and Abul Fazl. A new Indian language — Urdu — also developed. It drew much of its vocabulary as well as forms of literary expression from Persian. This language became the *lingua franca* of the urban centres in most parts of India.

In religion, this period was marked by two movements — the Sufi and Bhakti movements. The Sufis were the mystics of Islam and the Bhakti saints drew upon the traditions

of personal devotion to God in Hinduism. Both advocated tolerance and human brotherhood and condemned adherence to rituals and dogmas. They played an important role in bringing the Hindus and the Muslims together and enriched India's common cultural heritage. A new religion — Sikhism — arose in India during this period. The new religion was the product of the new religious environment created by the Sufi and Bhakti movements. The greatest ruler of this period was Akbar. His policy, known as *Sulh-Kul* or 'peace to all', was in many ways comparable to that of the ancient ruler Ashoka who has been mentioned before.

The period of British rule

The decline and disintegration of the Mughal empire in the eighteenth century was followed by the emergence of a number of small and large kingdoms. From about the middle of the eighteenth century began the British conquest of India and by about the middle of the nineteenth century almost the entire country had come under the British rule — the first foreign rule in India. The period of the British rule lasted until 15 August 1947 when India emerged as an independent nation.

The process of the British conquest was not a smooth one. There was no year during this period when the British did not face resistance and revolt in one part of the country or the other. The mightiest of these revolts took place in 1857. However, the revolt was suppressed.

The imperialist subjugation of India had far-reaching consequences for Indian society, its economy and culture. The traditional pattern of Indian life was disrupted. India's economic exploitation led to the destruction of India's indigenous industries and to her increased impoverishment. However, while the anti-imperialist struggles continued and gained strength, Indians also came into contact with modern science, rationalism and ideas of nationalism, democracy and social equality. Later, they were also influenced by the ideas of socialism. They began to look at their society critically. In every community and in all parts of the country, movements of religious and social reform grew. These movements aimed at removing social evils, some of which had acquired the sanctity of religion, and the reconstruction of Indian society on modern lines. The pioneer of these movements was Rammohun Roy who played a crucial role in spreading modern education and in banning inhuman practices such as *Sati* (burning of the widow on her dead husband's pyre).

The struggle for freedom

In the later half of the nineteenth century, the Indian national movement emerged which, in course of time, became a powerful force. It united the people of India and forged them into a nation. It aimed at ending the foreign rule and building a new independent India based on the principles of political and social equality and on a modern industrialized economy. Two of its greatest leaders were Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Mahatma Gandhi's leadership gave to the mass anti-imperialist struggle a peaceful and non-violent character. These two leaders also promoted a *secular* and *internationalist* outlook and brought people of all religious communities together to work for an India in which all religions would be equally respected and in which India's culture, with all its diversities, would be nurtured.

A new phase began in the history of India when we became an independent nation on 15 August 1947. The principles which have guided India's development as an independent nation were evolved during the period of her struggle for independence. These were embodied in India's Constitution which came in force on 26 January1950 when India became a Republic. The Preamble to the Constitution reads:

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA,

having solemnly resolved to constitute India

into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY, assuring the dignity of the individual

and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November 1949,

do HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO

OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.

Some outstanding Indians

Considering the vast span of our history, it is not possible to be fair in selecting a few outstanding personalities from our past.

We do not even know the names of those who made some of the most outstanding contributions to the making of our civilization. For example, the person who first used zero and the decimal place-value system in writing a number without which the numeral system that we use all over the world today would not exist, was an Indian who lived two thousand or more years ago. But we do not know his name. Or take all the great artistic creations of ancient India — pillars, *stupas*, sculpture, *viharas*, temples (carved out of huge rocks or standing structures built up of stone or brick) and cave paintings. The names of their creators are unknown.

The names of some ancient scholars, astronomers and mathematicians, physicians and surgeons, writers and poets, have come down to us along with the manuscripts of their works. But about their life and even about their time and the place where they lived, very little is known. One of the earliest among them was Panini. He is believed to have lived about 2,400 years ago in a city which is now known as Peshawar (in Pakistan). Experts on language are agreed that his work, known as *Ashtadhyayi*, was the first scientific work on grammar composed in the world and it remained the greatest work on grammar till the nineteenth century. This was a grammar of Sanskrit, India's classical language, and the rules prescribed by it have continued to be followed during the past 2,400 years. Charaka, who lived in the first r the second century AD, was one of the founders of the system of medicine which continue o be practised in India for hundreds of years. Sushruta, a surgeon, lived about 1,500 years ago.

With his plastic surgery, a soldier who lost his nose in the battle could have another one! The most important scientific figure of India's ancient period was Aryabhata (born 476 AD). He was an astronomer and mathematician. Kalidasa, who lived in the fourth and fifth centuries, and Amir Khusrau, who lived in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, are among India's most outstanding writers and poets. Guru Nanak is renowned as a saint and as the founder of Sikhism. Among the famous rulers have been three women — Razia Sultan, Chand Bibi and Laxmi Bai (Rani of Jhansi). The last named became a legend for the valiant fight she waged against the British rulers during the Revolt of 1857.

IV. OUR CULTURE TODAY

India can be divided into a number of cultural-linguistic zones. People in different parts of the country have been interacting with one another giving her culture certain common features. At the same time, each cultural zone has been nurturing its own distinct identity. In this sense, 'homogeneity' of culture has never been considered a desirable ideal to achieve. Similarly, the concept of a 'melting pot' has been absent in the history of our culture.

Languages

The hundreds of languages spoken in India can be grouped into four families — Indo-European, Dravidian, Austric and Sino-Indian. Of these, the Indo-European languages have the largest number of speakers — about 70 per cent of the population. The second largest number of speakers is of Dravidian languages, a little less than 30 per cent of the population. The rest of the population — about 2 per cent — speaks languages of the other two families. The number of languages used as media in education at the school level is 51. The 18 languages specified in India's Constitution are Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. Except for Sanskrit, which is a classical language, and Sindhi and Urdu, each of the other languages is the dominant language of one State or the other. The speakers of Sindhi are spread over different parts of the country while Urdu is a major language in a number of States. Another major language extensively used in India is English.

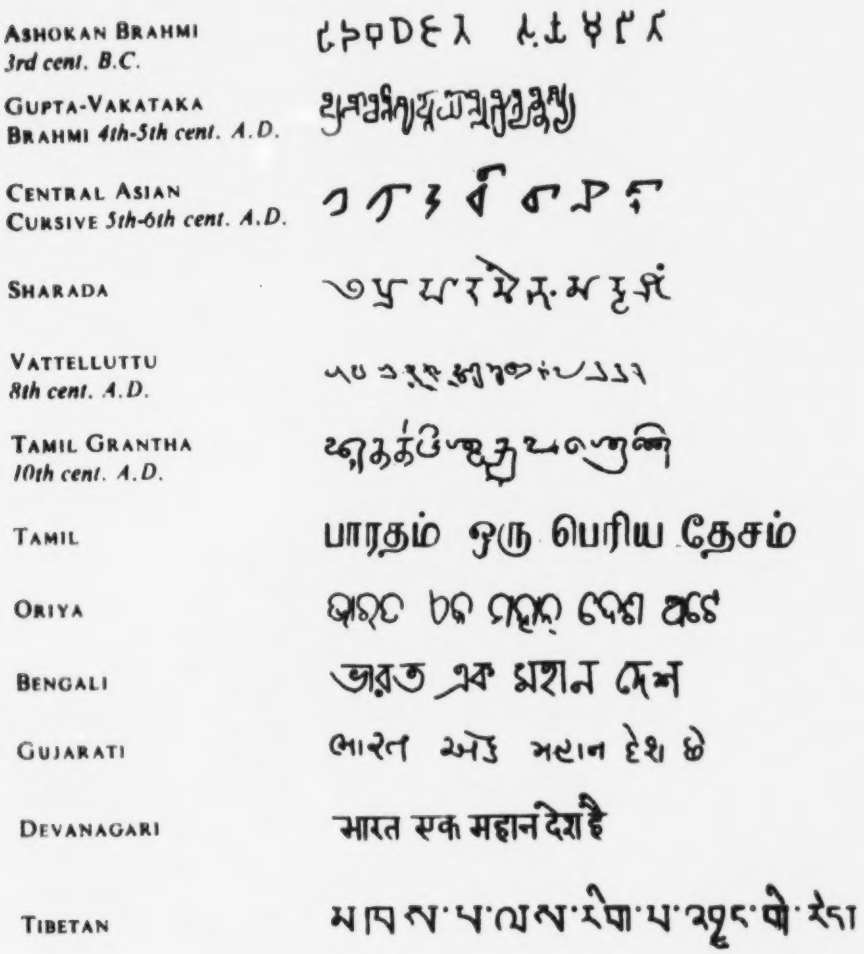
India is a federation or, as our Constitution puts it, a Union of States. There are 25 States and seven union territories. The latter are administered by the central government. The powers of the central government and of the State governments are specified in the Constitution. During the period of colonial rule, the administrative divisions of the country had no rational basis. After independence, the States were reorganized. The basic objective of this reorganization was to ensure that the people of every region of the country are able to nurture their distinctive cultures. The area in which a particular language was dominant was made into a separate State with its own official language. Hindi with the largest number of speakers in the country has been adopted as the official language of the Union government and the link language between the Union government and the State governments, and between State governments. English was made the associate official language.

Linguistic diversity adds to the richness of the culture of our country. However, there are also many problems. Though one can manage with some knowledge of Hindi or English throughout the country, language differences do hamper communication between speakers of different languages. Everyone loves her or his language but some people sometimes think that their language is superior to others. Linguistic chauvinism cannot be said to be absent in our country. Some people fear that Hindi would be imposed on them. Some others think that the importance that continues to be given to English is harmful to other Indian languages and, indeed, to the country.

Another problem is the script. Every major language has its own script, and all the Indian scripts are beautiful to look at. Most of them are closely related to one another. Some of us think that a common script for all our languages would be a good thing. It would help us read and understand many things in other languages. But most people, perhaps quite naturally, love

their scripts as much as they love their languages and are not very impressed by the idea of having a common script.

A CHART SHOWING SOME INDIAN SCRIPTS



Some ancient and modern Indian scripts

Food, dress and customs

Every region has its own forms of dress and even when the dress is the same, the way of wearing it varies from region to region. For women, sari can be considered a pan-Indian dress though the style of wearing it differs. For men, particularly in the cities, shirts and trousers are the common dress.

There are variations throughout the country and within each region in food habits. The methods of cooking the same kind of food and the spices used vary from place to place. Rice is the staple food of our people in most parts of the country. However, the kind of rice which is preferred and the methods of cooking it are different. While these variations continue, most

people are becoming less 'parochial' in their food habits and almost every kind of food is available in at least all the major cities of the country.

In social practices and behaviour also, there are many diversities. The ceremonies for marriage, for example, differ from place to place. Even the concepts of modesty vary. In most parts of northern India, a woman, to look modest, traditionally, should cover her head and even most of her face. Not all of them really do so. There is no such 'requirement' for women in southern parts of the country.

Dance and music

There are numerous distinct forms of dance and music, both classical and folk. Some of the classical dance forms are Manipuri, Kathak, Kathakali, Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi and Odissi which developed in Manipur, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa respectively. Their popularity and even their exponents are not confined to these States alone.

The two main schools of classical music in India, both vocal and instrumental, are Hindustani, which developed in northern India, and Carnatic, which developed in southern India. The two have many things in common though each of them has its distinctive features. Most musical instruments used by the exponents of these two schools are also different. For some years now the exponents of the two schools have been coming together to give joint performances at what we call *Jugalbandi*. These performances have thrilled the audiences. The variety in folk forms of music and dance is, of course, much greater.

Traditional tribal dances from Nagu Damees

Tribal people

About 8 per cent of our total population consists of tribal people. They are derived from many different 'racial' and ethnic stocks. Each tribe has not only its own language but also its distinct habits and customs, social institutions, and arts and crafts. Their folk dances are among the most colourful in the country.

Religion

We have already mentioned the various religions which were born in India as well as those which came to India from outside. The major religions are Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism. Besides these religions, there are also a large number of religious beliefs and practices which are quite different from the beliefs and practices of major religions. There are also people, as in other parts of the world, who do not follow any religion.

Hinduism: About 82 per cent of the country's population are Hindu. Hinduism is difficult to define. There are Hindus who believe in only one God or Supreme Universal Spirit while there are others who, besides one Supreme God, also believe in many other gods and goddesses. All Hindus, generally speaking, believe in the doctrines of *karma* and the rebirth. According to the first doctrine, the existence of each living being is determined by its actions in previous lives. (Good and bad acts will have their effect on the next existence.) The second doctrine means that the soul within a body never dies. It is only the body that dies and is born again and again.

There is no single scripture of Hinduism. The various works that can be considered sacred include the *Vedas*, the *Bhagavadagita*, the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, and the *Puranas*. One of the things that the readers belonging to other cultures should know is that most Hindus cremate their dead.

Islam: About 12 per cent of India's population, numbering about 100 million people, follow this religion. India thus has the second largest number of Muslims in the world. Islam teaches faith in the one all-powerful God, Allah, and in the Prophethood of Muhammad. Muslims recognize earlier prophets and revere them but believe that Muhammad is the last prophet. Muslims all over the world regard themselves as brothers and equals. Islam enjoins upon its followers five principles: (i) they must proclaim the unity of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad; (ii) they must offer prayers five times every day; (iii) they must give alms to the poor; (iv) they must keep fast from dawn to dusk during the holy month of Ramadan; and (v) they should, if possible, go on a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime.

The holy book of Islam is the *Quran* which is believed to have been revealed by God to Muhammad through angel Gabriel. The two main sects among Muslims are Sunni and Shia. Both of them have millions of followers in the country.

There are mosques in every part of the country where Muslims offer prayers (Friday prayers are particularly important). Some of these mosques are among the most magnificent monuments of the country.

Muslim Id celebration, Jama Masjid, Delhi

Christianity: Christianity came to India during the early centuries of the Christian era. Christians constitute India's third largest religious community. All the major Christian sects — Catholic, Protestant and Syrian Christian — have their followers in India.

There are many magnificent churches in different parts of India. Particularly notable among them are the churches in the State of Goa.

Jainism and Buddhism: Jainism and Buddhism arose in India in the sixth century BC Jainism stresses Right Knowledge, Right Belief and Right Conduct as the means to attain salvation. To the Jains, every object has a soul. They, therefore, lay great emphasis on *ahimsa* or non-injury and avoid hurting or killing any object. Jainism enjoins upon its followers to abstain from destroying life, from stealing, from lying and from committing any unchaste act. There are two sects of Jainism — the Svetambaras whose *Munis* or saints dress in white and the Digambaras whose saints are 'sky-clad' or naked. There are 4 million followers of Jainism in India.

Gautama the Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, taught four fundamental truths: (1) there is suffering in the world; (2) this suffering has a cause; (3) the cause is desire; and (4) it is possible to put an end to suffering if desire is removed. To attain *nirvana* or freedom from birth and rebirth, and to put an end to suffering, the Buddha taught the Eightfold path

consisting of Right View, Right Resolution, Right Words, Right Action, Right Living, Right Effort, Right Thinking and Right Concentration. He also stressed the importance of the Middle Path and said that one should avoid the two extremes of strict asceticism and too much indulgence in worldly pleasures. Buddhism also laid stress on *ahimsa* though not in the extreme form which is advocated by Jainism.

The two major sects into which Buddhism in India was divided are the Mahayana and the Hinayana. Though Buddhism declined in India, it spread to many countries of the world, particularly in East and South-East Asia.

Sikhism: Sikhism had its origin in the teachings of Guru Nanak (1469-1538). It lays stress on belief in one God, who is formless, by repeating whose name and dwelling on it with love and devotion, one can get salvation without distinction of caste, creed or sect. Sikhism was opposed to the idol worship and formal ritual observances of both Hinduism and Islam. It played a significant role in bringing Hindus and Muslims together by creating an atmosphere of goodwill, peace and harmony.

The scripture of Sikhism is the *Adi Granth* or the *Guru Granth Sahib*. It is a compilation of the devotional poetry of many Bhakti saints and of the Sikh Gurus. The Sikh places of worship are called the Gurudwaras. They are found in all parts of India. The Sikh prayers consist of recitations from the *Granth Sahib*. They are rendered in a musical style which has serenity as its chief characteristic. With the tenth and the last Guru, the Sikhs acquired five symbols which distinguish them from the others. These are commonly called the five Ks and are *kesha* (hair), *kangha* (comb), *kara* (iron bracelet), *kripan* (dagger) and *kachchha* (lower underclothing). The Sikhs do not cut their hair or shave. They are India's fourth largest religious community with a population of about 17 million.

Zoroastrianism: Zoroastrianism is the religion of ancient Persia. It was founded by Zarathustra in the seventh century BC The holy book of Zoroastrianism is the *Avesta-e-Zend*. According to this religion, the entire universe and all life represents a struggle between good and evil, light and darkness. The struggle between Ahura Mazda, who represents the forces of good, and Ahriman, who represents the forces of evil, would, according to this religion, eventually end in the victory of Ahura Mazda and the world would then become a righteous place. The sun and fire are worshipped as symbols of Ahura Mazda. The followers of this religion in India are known as Parsis.

Judaism: Judaism is the religion of the Jews. It came to India during the early centuries of the Christian era. The number of its followers in India is small. There are some very beautiful synagogues in the country which were built hundreds of years ago.

We have mentioned earlier the tradition of tolerance in our country. Generally speaking, the followers of various religions have lived in India in peace and harmony with one another. They have also influenced the beliefs and practices of one another.

Major festivals

Among the major all-India festivals for which we get holidays are: Holi, which marks the end of winter; Mahavir Jayanti, which is the birth anniversary of Mahavir, the founder of Jainism; Good Friday, the festival which commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus; Idul Fitr, the day marking the end of fasting during the month of Ramadan; Buddha Purnima, the day on which the Buddha was born, attained enlightenment, and passed away (all these events happened on

the same day though in different years); Idul Zuha, the day which commemorates Abraham's offering his son for sacrifice; Muharram, the day which commemorates the martyrdom of Imam Husain, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad; Janmashtami, the birthday of the Hindu god Krishna; Maha Ashtami, the day on which the Hindu goddess Durga is worshipped; Dussehra, the day commemorating the victory of Rama over Ravana; Diwali, which marks the return of Rama at the end of the period of his exile, as well as the worship of Hindu goddesses Lakshmi and Kali; Guru Nanak Jayanti, which commemorates the birthday of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism; Milad-ul-Nabi, which commemorates the birthday of Prophet Muhammad; and Christmas, the day marking the birth of Jesus Christ. Besides these religious-cultural festivals and holidays, we have three national holidays and celebrations. These are 2 October, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, 15 August, the Independence Day and 26 January, the Republic Day.

Huge effigies of Ravana and his brother are set to fire as a part of Dussehra celebration

Most of our religious-cultural festivals do not fall on the same day every year. The traditional Hindu calendar is a solar-lunar calendar and the dates of various festivals are fixed according to this calendar. It does not correspond to the Gregorian, or what is popularly called

the Christian calendar. The Muslims follow a lunar calendar which is called the Hijri calendar. So the dates of these festivals and holidays change every year.

Our most important national festival is the Republic Day. It is celebrated in every State capital with great pomp and show. The most spectacular and colourful celebration takes place in Delhi, the capital of the country. The celebration begins with the laying of the wreath by the Prime Minister at the Amar Jawan Jyoti (Eternal Flame) which has been lit under the India Gate. This is followed by the colourful Republic Day parade at which the President of the country takes salute. The parade, beginning with the military parade, starts at Vijay Chowk and after passing through the Raj Path and some other parts of the city ends at the Red Fort. Besides the military parade, there are parades by schoolchildren who perform dances at regular intervals. The tableaux prepared by each State depicting some aspect of the life and culture of their people are another interesting part of the parade. Hundreds of thousands of people line up all along the route to watch the parade.

Outstanding personalities of modern times

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

The greatest Indian personality in the field of culture in modern times was Rabindranath Tagore. He published his first poem when he was twelve. During his long creative career, he wrote poems, short stories, novels, plays and essays. His writings have won him a permanent place in world literature. In 1913, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for his collection of poems entitled *Gitanjali* which he himself had translated from Bengali into English. He was the first writer in Asia to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. He was truly a renaissance man. He made significant contributions to music. At the age of 70, he took to painting and did about 3,000 pictures in a period of ten years. He was a great educational thinker and, at the age of 40, started a school at Shantiniketan at which young pupils lived and received education in the midst of nature in an atmosphere of freedom. In 1918, he set up the Vishvabharati or World University which became one of the leading universities in India, particularly in the field of art and culture. He was one of the pioneers of the freedom movement. He had been knighted by the British monarch in 1915 but renounced his knighthood in 1919 when he heard of the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar ordered by a British general.

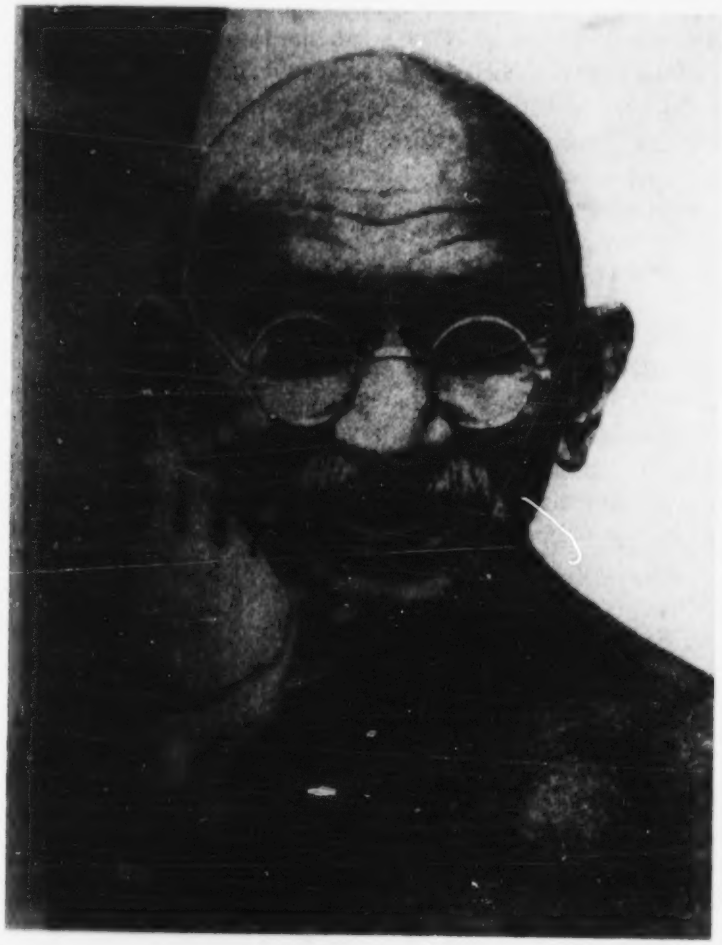
Tagore's song 'Jana Gana Mana' became India's National Anthem when the country won her independence.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

The most outstanding Indian of modern times was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. After receiving his legal education in Great Britain, he went to South Africa to practise law. The Indian population in South Africa — most of them labourers — was subjected to a vicious racist oppression and branded as 'coolies'. Gandhi waged a long and heroic battle against the racist system. The philosophy and method of struggle he evolved was one of Passive Resistance which he called *Satyagraha*. It was based on truth and non-violence (*ahimsa*). It meant refusal to submit to oppression and injustice. It also meant fearlessness and willingness to accept suffering for the refusal to submit. It was completely peaceful and without any hatred even for the evil-doer. 'Non-violence', he said, 'is the law of our species, as violence is the law of the brute'. He returned to India in 1915 and soon became the unquestioned leader of India's struggle for freedom. He defied the mighty British Empire 'with the might of the dumb millions' of India in whom he infused a spirit of fearlessness and the will to brave any repression. Thus a

new form of struggle began which had no precedent. It was a peaceful revolutionary struggle in which millions openly disobeyed the law and courted arrest and imprisonment. Gandhi himself suffered numerous terms of imprisonment during mass campaigns of non-cooperation and civil disobedience. He identified himself totally with the life of the common people and became the symbol of the downtrodden. The battle that he waged was not only for winning freedom from foreign rule but, as he said, 'for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country, in whose making they have an effective voice, an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people, an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony'. He came to be known as the *Mahatma* (the great soul) and the Father of the Nation.

He fell victim to an assassin's bullet on 30 January 1948. That day is observed every year as the Martyrs' Day in India.



Mahatma Gandhi

Ramanujan (1887-1920)

The greatest Indian mathematician in modern times was Srinivasa Ramanujan. He held a petty job at the Madras Port Trust. However, he continued his work in mathematics and sent his notebooks in which he had jotted down his mathematical studies to Professor G.H. Hardy at

Cambridge. Professor Hardy, going through the notebooks, realized that they were the works of a mathematical genius. Through his efforts, Ramanujan went to Cambridge and collaborated with him in important mathematical work. Ramanujan was made a Fellow of the Royal Society at the age of thirty-one. In 1919 due to ill health, he returned to India and died at the age of thirty-three. He is considered as one of the few natural geniuses in the history of mathematics. Professor Hardy wrote, 'I still say to myself when I am depressed and find myself forced to listen to pompous and tiresome people, "Well, I have done one thing you could never have done, and this is to have collaborated with both Littlewood and Ramanujan on something like equal terms"'.

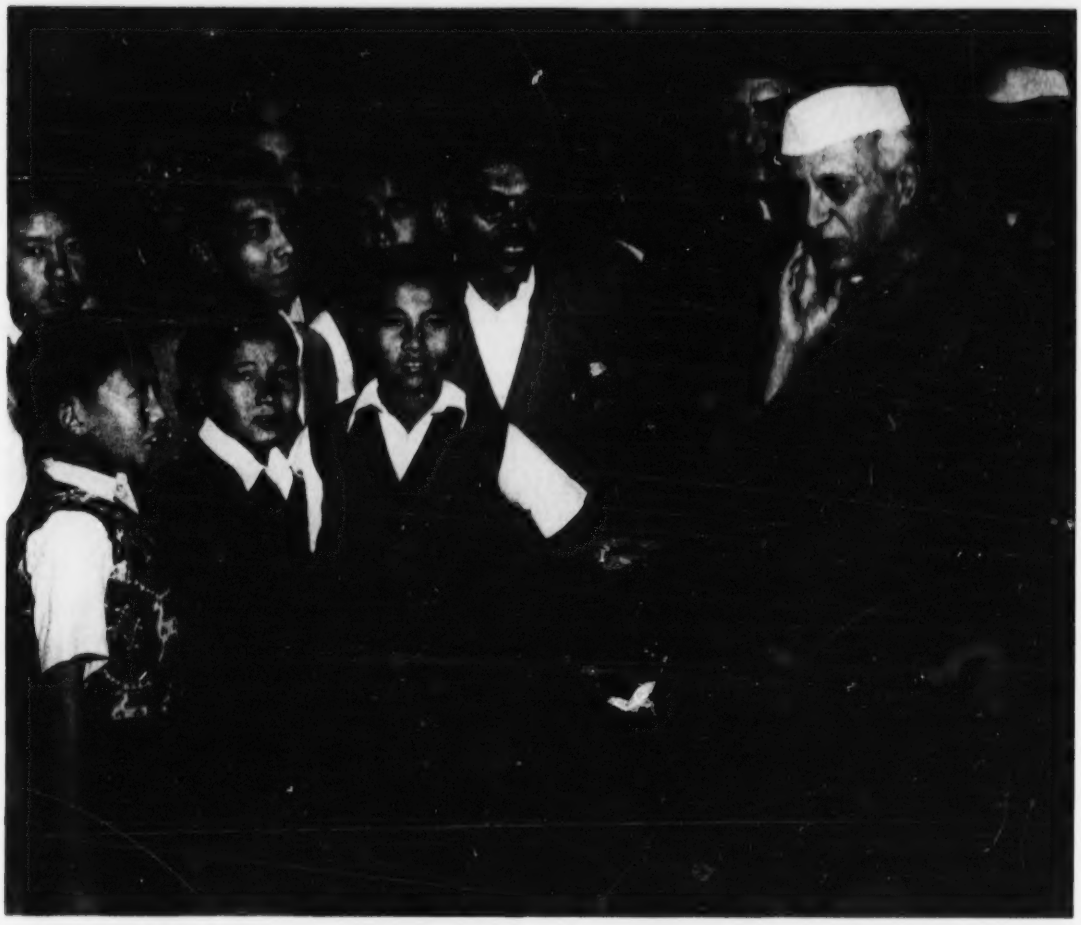
C.V. Raman (1888-1970)

One of the greatest among outstanding personalities in science was C.V. Raman. At the age of 19, he took up a job as the Assistant Accountant-General at Calcutta. His real passion, however, was science and, outside his office hours, he started pursuing his scientific researches at the laboratory of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science. His job now became secondary to him. In 1917 he became Professor of Physics at Calcutta University. In 1930, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics. Besides working in various branches of physics and publishing hundreds of papers, Sir C.V. Raman (he had been knighted in 1929) played a leading role in promoting scientific research in India.

Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964)

The most outstanding personality of India in the twentieth century, second only to Mahatma Gandhi, was Jawaharlal Nehru. Soon after his return from England where he completed his schooling and later his legal studies, he plunged himself into the struggle for freedom. For about 40 years, first as a leader of the freedom movement and for 17 years as independent India's Prime Minister, he shaped the destiny of India and the ideas of generations of her people. His role was particularly crucial in mobilizing the people not only for the political independence of the country but also for building an India dedicated to democracy, secularism and social justice, and a world free from colonialism and international tensions and conflicts.

During the period from 1920 to 1947 when he was one of the foremost leaders of our country's struggle for independence, he was imprisoned by the British rulers nine times and spent about ten years in various British jails. These long years in jail were utilized by him in an extremely useful activity — writing. It all began when he started writing letters from prison to his daughter whose education he had not been able to look after due to his total involvement in the struggle for freedom and long absences from home, often in prison. (His daughter, Indira Gandhi, was India's Prime Minister from 1966 to 1977 and from 1980 to 1984.) These letters originally meant for educating his daughter were published in 1931 under the title *Letters from a father to his daughter*. Later, during another and this time longer prison term, he wrote another series of letters which were published in about a thousand-page volume as *Glimpses of world history* in 1934. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote many other books later, the more notable of them being *An autobiography* and *The discovery of India*. The books that we have mentioned first were meant for children and are still read by us. His writings help us in broadening our horizons and our vision of India and the world and to see the two as inseparable.



Jawaharlal Nehru with schoolchildren

Zakir Husain (1897-1969)

Dr Zakir Husain was an eminent educationist, scholar and public figure of modern India. A brilliant student, he was referred to by his contemporaries in the college as 'a walking encyclopaedia'. In 1920, a great mass struggle for freedom had started in India. Many Indians at that time were of the view that the kind of education that was being imparted in schools and colleges set up by the British Government in India was not suited to the needs of the Indian people. The Indian leaders gave a call to the students to boycott the schools and colleges run by the government. They had started setting up their own schools and colleges. Zakir Husain played an important role in this effort. In 1920, the Jamia Millia Islamia (National Muslim University) came into being and Zakir Husain became a teacher of economics at this university. Later, he went to Germany for higher studies. On his return to India, he became the Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia. India was still not an independent country. At this time, Mahatma Gandhi wanted to introduce a scheme under which every Indian child would receive education for seven years. Dr Zakir Husain was made responsible for preparing the details of what to teach and how to teach. Thus the foundations of a system of education which would be relevant to India were laid. Dr Zakir Husain dedicated himself to the cause of education of the

young. He was not very happy with the books that were written for children. Most of the authors of books for children were too pompous and too 'anxious to teach moral lessons'. He wrote many beautiful stories for children. After India became independent, Dr Zakir Husain played an important role in the reform and promotion of education. In 1962, he became the Vice-President of India and in 1967 the President of India. He passed away in 1969.

V. WHO ARE WE?

Well, we are Kasmiris, Dogras, Himachalis, Punjabis, Haryanavis, Rajasthanis, Uttar Pradeshis, Madhya Pradeshis, Gujaratis, Maharashtrians, Goans, Malayalees, Tamils, Kannadas, Andhras, Bengalis, Assamese, Oriyas, Sikkimese, Biharis, Manipuris, Tripuris, Nagas, Mizos, Khasis, Jayantiyas, Garos, Mundas, Santhals, etc. We are also Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, Jews, etc. We are black, white, brown and yellow. We are all these things and many more.

We can also say that, above all, we are Indians. This is so, first of all and quite simply, because we live in a country called India and this country is an independent sovereign nation. We have our own Constitution, our own government, our own policies. We are all governed by the same Constitution and the same laws, and whatever happens in any one part of the country affects, to some extent, all of us.

What we have said above is perhaps not enough to *define* our Indianness. We should like to add that an essential element of our Indianness is our respect for all the other things that we are. That is, we are Indians without ceasing to be Punjabis or Tamils or Hindus or Christians or whatever. This respect is a part of our entire history and, more recently, of our struggle for freedom. This struggle united our people for our common political, social and economic objectives. These objectives were for the building of a new independent India and they are common to all of us. An essential feature of this struggle was also the recognition of, and respect for, all our cultural, religious and ethnic diversities.

There are, of course, some people in our country who think that they are more Indian than others, or better than others. They sometimes create tensions in the name of a place of worship, language, caste or community. Sometimes they also resort to violence. Such people were there in the past also. During our freedom struggle, for example, they thought that their respective religions separated them from the others. Our foreign rulers at that time encouraged such people as it helped them prolong their rule. We believe that such people and their ideas are anachronisms.

We would end this section by quoting from Jawaharlal Nehru's *The discovery of India* which he wrote during his last and longest imprisonment.

'We are citizens of no mean country and we are proud of the land of our birth, of our people, our culture and traditions. That pride should not be for a romanticized past to which we want to cling, nor should it encourage exclusiveness or a want of appreciation of other ways than ours. It must never allow us to forget our many weaknesses and failings or blunt our longing to be rid of them. We have a long way to go and much leeway to make up before we can take our proper station with others in the van of human civilization and progress. And we have to hurry, for the time at our disposal is limited and the pace of the world grows ever swifter. It was India's way in the past to welcome and absorb other cultures. That is much more necessary today, for we march to the one world of tomorrow where national cultures will be intermingled with the international culture of the human race. We shall therefore seek wisdom and knowledge and friendship and comradeship wherever we can find them, and co-operate with others in common tasks, but we are no suppliants for others' favours and patronage. Thus we shall remain true Indians and Asiatics, and become at the same time good internationalists and world citizens.'

Family, school and community life

Family life

To some of us, the family means parents and unmarried brothers and sisters. To some others, it means, besides the above, married brothers along with their children. And to some others still, it means all the above and paternal grandparents also. In a few cases, married and unmarried uncles (father's brothers) are also a part of the family. Paternal grandparents stay either permanently with the eldest son or move on from one son to another at regular intervals of time. Seldom, if ever, do grandparents stay alone.

However, there are some communities in India which are matrilocal. In these communities, the husband lives with his wife's family. In these families, maternal grandparents stay with their daughters and their children.

Within the family, all members co-operate with one another. The basic feature of life in the family is that the younger members are always respectful towards the elders who, in turn, help the younger ones in their day-to-day activities. There is mutual teasing and quarrelling among brothers and sisters.

Outside the school, we spend much of our time playing with our peers or reading story books and novels, or watching television and listening to the radio. In the evening we just go around or visit one another. We go to the movies or parks. We talk about our teachers and our classmates. We also discuss our elders, particularly if they ill-treat us. Girls are less outgoing than boys, and while the boys may just loiter around, the girls visit their friends and their families. Sometimes we discuss sex quite frankly. Although these discussions are interesting, we make them as private as possible. Such matters are never openly discussed in the family. We behave as if we have little or no knowledge about these things.

Dinner time is the time for small talk and gossip. This is when we discuss relatives, friends, household problems and politics. Sometimes we complain against one another to our parents or grandparents. If our complaints are serious, the guilty one gets a scolding or even a beating. Some of us often feel that our elders are not always fair to us, although such feelings are momentary.

All of us perform some household chores. (The only possible exceptions are children of the very rich who, we suspect, have an army of servants to do every little job in the family.) In the cities, it is generally our job to buy milk, bread, provisions, etc. In villages we help our elders in the fields and in feeding the cattle or fetching potable water. Even when we are at play, our parents do not hesitate to call us to bring this or that from the market. It is sometimes irritating, but we dare not disobey them. Let us confess that within the household, more chores are performed by girls than by boys and sometimes the boys have a tendency to lord it over their sisters. Some parents still think that it is the exclusive responsibility of daughters to perform household chores. Some of them do not even encourage girls to study, even when they do much better as students than their brothers.

Our living quarters depend on the family income. In the cities, some people have very big houses and each member has a bedroom to himself or herself. Most people, however, have small houses. Flats, or apartments, are usually the norm in big cities, and these have a similar design. These apartments generally have one, two or three bedrooms plus a living room and dining space. If the bedrooms are few and the size of the family is large, even the terrace is

used as a sleeping quarter. (In most parts of India, the climate makes this possible.) Not many of us can afford to have separate guest rooms and, therefore, guests have to be accommodated in the living room which, at night, becomes a bedroom. Some apartments are quite posh and very well furnished. Some kind of a dining table is quite common in most homes. The television set is often placed in the living room and is generally seen as a part of the house furniture. The size of the house as well as its design in the rural areas, again, varies according to the means. Many people in the villages sleep in the open, in the courtyard of the house or on the terrace, even when the house has a number of rooms. In the cities, every house has electricity. Most villages are also electrified though each household in the village may not have electricity.

An Indian family - children, parents and grandparents

There are big variations in the family size in India. There are families which have only two members and there are families with even 20 members or more. But the average family in cities has five or six members while in villages it has seven or eight.

For transport, most of us depend on buses and railway trains. The railways in India are entirely government owned and in many cases the city and inter-city buses are also run by the government or by municipal authorities. Many of us also have bicycles which we use for short distances. Some people also have motor cars. There are various other modes of transport available in the cities, for instance cycle rickshaws, horse-pulled tongas, auto-rickshaws and taxis. In villages, for long distances, the common mode of transport is the bus. To go to the nearby village, town or city, trollies which are attached to tractors are also used. These trollies are used for carrying both goods and people. In many parts of the country bullock carts, which are at times beautifully decorated, are used for transportation also.

Our parents and grandparents often tell us many things about life when they were young. They always point out how disciplined young children were in their time and how even for small misdemeanours they used to get punished by their teachers. From what our grandparents tell us, it seems that many things have changed since their times. Life was much less complicated than now and more leisurely. Everything was cheap and nice. Living was far easier and fellow-feeling much stronger. No mad rush and no maddening crowd either. Family life was much happier and there were fewer tensions. However, even our elders agree that many things have changed for the better. Getting educated is much more common then before. The number of homes having electricity is very large. Every family has a transistor radio and a cassette player, and most in the cities have television sets. In the city, one of the most notable changes has been education of girls many of whom not only go in for higher education but also for jobs. Earlier, even girls who had been able to receive higher education would not go in for jobs. Their main job after getting married was to raise and look after the family. The main exceptions were teachers and doctors.

In the rural areas also, there have been many basic changes. Earlier, most people were at the mercy of the landlords and were always in debt. In some parts of the country, the big landlords behaved like rulers. In some areas which were ruled by Rajas and Maharajas, there was no rule of law. After independence, all this has come to an end. There are no Rajas and Maharajas, and no big landlords. There are many more towns and cities than before, and means of transport even for very long distances are easily available and are much faster than before.

Another important change has been in the field of economy. Until about 50 years ago we imported most of our consumer goods. Now there is hardly anything of our daily use that is not produced within the country.

A major change has taken place in health care. According to our grandparents, some of the common diseases of today simply did not exist when they were children. They, however, concede that in their time, there was no treatment available for many diseases. There were very few doctors. Quackery was common though some of the family recipes for treatment were quite effective for common ailments. The most important achievement has been the elimination of epidemics. Malaria, typhoid, cholera, tuberculosis and influenza, some major killer diseases, are all controlled now. Smallpox has been eradicated. Gone are the days when people thought that smallpox was caused by evil spirits or by a goddess, and that black magic was its only treatment. Today things have drastically changed. Medical facilities are available to almost all,

and the poorest have access to them. Life expectancy has increased. Whether or not there has been a proportionate change in its quality remains an open question.

School life

Article 45 of our Constitution provides for free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of fourteen. In practice, many children do not go to school, and many of those who do at the age of five or six drop out even before they are ten or eleven. A very large population in our country being poor, many children are required to help the family in earning a living. For them, going to school means loss of family earnings. Therefore, free education and free textbooks, notebooks, school uniforms and various other incentives have not fully succeeded in drawing children to school. This is a serious problem our country is facing.

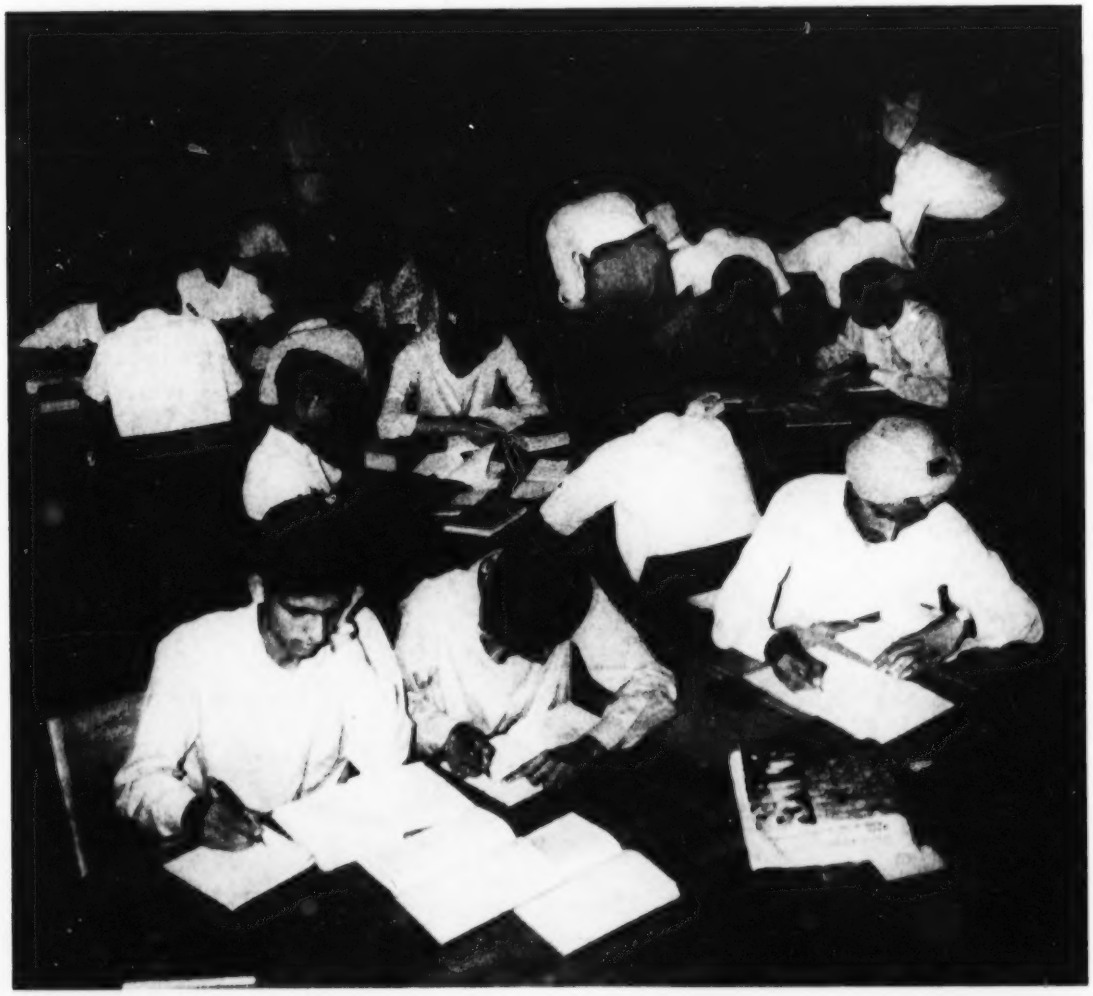
The population of children in India in the age-group five to fourteen is about 200 million which by itself is more than the total population of any country in the world except China, the former Soviet Union and the United States. About 130 million children attend 740,000 schools. Though the number of students and of schools has increased considerably since our country became independent, we have a long way to go before every child gets education up to the age of fourteen.

Delhi Public School, New Delhi

We have mainly four types of schools. There are government schools (central as well as State), schools run by local bodies (municipal corporations, village *panchayats*, etc.), government-aided schools and unaided private schools. Only about 10 per cent of the schools are private schools. All schools follow more or less the same curriculum, which is prescribed by the State education authorities. One important feature of our educational system is its complete separation from religion. Though teaching about religions is part of the school curriculum, religious instruction is not permitted in schools which receive funds from the State. There are schools which are run by religious bodies. Even in these schools receiving religious instruction is not binding on the students.

Schooling in India is of 12 years duration and is divided into four stages. Generally grades I to V constitute the lower primary, grades VI to VIII upper primary, grades IX and X secondary and grades XI and XII higher secondary stages. Some schools also have a pre-primary or nursery stage. There are also exclusive nursery schools.

Generally a child enters grade I of the school at the age of five years and above. (Pre-primary schools admit children at the age of three and above.) Thus, a child generally completes her/his schooling at the age of seventeen plus. At the end of grades X and XII, children appear in public examinations conducted by the Boards of secondary education. Children who pass these examinations are deemed to have completed their secondary and higher secondary education.



Reading room of a school library

In our country, the school year varies from State to State. In most States, it starts in the month of April and ends in March of the next year. Before the school year ends, annual examinations are held and the results are declared within a week or ten days. The time of annual examinations is one of great tension and pressure for us. We have to work hard night

and day to pass these examinations, which are among the most terrible things in our school life. They take away all the joy from studying.

The annual examination is followed by a long summer vacation which generally falls in the months of May, June and part of July. In some parts of the country, particularly in the hilly areas, the main vacation is during winter — December and January. This vacation is generally from eight to ten weeks. Besides this we get two more vacations during autumn and winter for ten to fifteen days each. Most of the vacation periods coincide with festivals and are, therefore, full of joy and excitement. Schools which have a long winter vacation are closed in summer for about a month. Because our teachers give us a lot of homework to do, sometimes we think that we are not entirely free to do what we like or read what we want to.

For most of us, the school day lasts about six hours. It starts at eight in the morning and continues up to two in the afternoon. There are some schools which start at seven and close at one in summer and start at ten and close at four in winter. There are many schools which have two shifts. In these schools, the morning shift works from seven to 12.30 and the afternoon shift from one to six. The school functions for about 200 days in the year.

An arts and crafts class

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From grade I to grade X, we have what we call general education. All of us study the same subjects and there are no options. At the primary level (grades I to V), we study one language, which is generally the mother tongue, mathematics and environmental studies. Health and physical education, art education and work experience are the other subjects at this stage. In many schools, two languages are taught from grade I itself. In others, a second language is introduced from grade VI. In grade VII, a third language is also introduced. By the time we complete our secondary education (after ten years of schooling), we have studied three languages. These are generally Hindi, English and another modern Indian language. In many schools, Sanskrit, India's classical language, is also compulsory. From grade VI, many subjects are introduced, including science, mathematics and social sciences (comprising history, geography and civics, and in grades IX and X also economics). After grade X when we enter the higher secondary stage, we start studying subjects of our choice. (Let us confess here that this choice is not always entirely ours; sometimes the school or the parents think that it is their right to choose for us.) Physical education, art education and work experience also continue from grade VI onwards, although the study of art is not really given enough importance.

A major problem during our schooling years is the homework. Most teachers, and unfortunately also most parents, seem to think that left to ourselves we would be doing nothing but making mischief. So before the school day is over, almost every teacher assigns us a lot of homework which must be done before we return to the school next morning. And when we return home from school, the parents go on reminding us of the homework and admonishing us if we neglect it or are otherwise engaged in more joyful activities. Sometimes our school homework engages the whole family, with every member helping us or doing it for us. We have many jokes about it. For example, the teacher asks a student, 'How come your homework in English is more legible than the one in science?' and the student replies, 'Madam, my mother's handwriting is better than my father's'.

Schoolchildren lending a helping hand in the construction of a new school building

In addition to studying school subjects we have some other activities like National Service Scheme (NSS) and National Cadet Corps (NCC). NSS is meant for social service while NCC is a wing of military training. Both NSS and NCC organize camps far away from our schools. In these camps we meet children from different parts of the country. We have lots of fun in these camps. Every day there are cultural programmes presented by different groups. Through NSS, we take up projects like tree plantation, cleaning roads, literacy projects, and voluntary work in hospitals and in slums.

A few schools also have exchange programmes with schools in other countries. Sometimes we take up projects on other countries and put up exhibitions on the life and culture of those countries. Those of us who study in metropolitan cities have an advantage over others in doing such projects as we are able to get a lot of help from the embassies and consulates of other countries. Some of us from Delhi recently gave public performances of programmes on the themes of peace, apartheid and human rights. Three years ago, some of our seniors in school took part in an essay and poster competition to mark the bicentenary of the French Revolution. Three of them were selected to go to France during the bicentenary celebrations.

Community life

As in the family, members of a village community or the neighbourhood in a big city are generally on affectionate terms with one another. There are no formal associations or clubs, only a number of informal groups that are important and influential. Sometimes formal associations of residents are formed to take care of common community services such as engaging watchmen, electricians and plumbers. Elders command special respect from children and middle-aged men are invariably addressed as uncles.

Birth, death, marriage and even divorce are not strictly private family affairs but community events with almost everyone participating and displaying the appropriate emotion.

Visiting neighbours, relatives and friends without prior appointment or 'warning' is a common occurrence. Nobody is ever offended by an untimely visitor, who may have dropped in for no reason but is welcome all the same.

This is true of community life in India at large, but now we are told that things are changing somewhat and that we are becoming 'modernized'. This 'modernization' has taken place in metropolitan cities where people live in congested complexes of flats and remain blissfully unaware of even the existence of their next-door neighbours. But this 'modernization', in spite of some advantages, has not found favour with most of us. We still prefer the old style of living where everyone is welcome to take interest in, even interfere with, the affairs of others. We love the old style. We are not left alone when we want to be, but we are also never lonely.

In one sense the entire country can be called a museum. You can see in contemporary India all the stages through which Indian society has passed during the last 5,000 years. Advanced technology goes hand in hand with the most primitive tools which are still in use. The latest in automobiles alongside ancient bullock-carts or hand-pulled carts, a skyscraper alongside rudimentary shacks, a herd of cows squatting in the middle of a busy road unmindful of the commotion they create — these are common sights in some cities. Some such visual images of the country appear as pictures published outside in books, including textbooks.

As a result of almost two centuries of colonial rule, our country, in spite of its vast natural and human resources, had become one of the most economically backward in the world. At the time of independence, it had very few industries and most industrial goods were imported. During the period since independence, this position has changed. There is hardly any area of industrial production for which we do not have our own factories and plants. These include: industries based on agriculture such as cotton, jute, wool, silk and synthetic textiles, sugar, vegetable oils and paper; industries based on minerals, such as iron and steel, and machine tools; various types of equipment for transport such as railways, trucks, buses, cars, motor cycles, bicycles, ships and aircrafts; electrical goods and appliances; electronic goods such as radios, televisions, video-cassette recorders, record players, computers, etc.; chemical industries such as pharmaceuticals, petro-chemicals and fertilizers, and cement.

About two-thirds of India's population is engaged in agriculture and the country produces a vast variety of agricultural products. The food crops produced in India are rice (the area in India which is under rice cultivation is the largest in the world), wheat, millet, maize (corn) and pulses, various types of oil-seeds, sugar-cane, potato, spices, fruits, tea, coffee and cocoa, fibres such as cotton, jute, silk and wool, and other cash crops such as rubber and tobacco.

In almost every area of agriculture and industry, our country is able to meet most of its requirements. We have close economic relations with almost all countries of the world, both developed and developing. Traditionally we have been exporting various kinds of primary products to the industrialized countries and have been importing industrial goods from them. Our exports now include industrial and engineering goods, while to most industrialized countries they continue to be largely primary products. Our major exports are gems and jewellery, cotton fabrics and garments, tea, machinery and transport equipment, iron ore, and leather and leather goods. It is likely that the tea that you drink comes from India. Our country assists many less industrialized countries in setting up their industries, building their railway systems and various other developmental programmes. There has been an increasing realization that there should be greater economic co-operation among the countries of the South, the word which is commonly used to refer to the developing countries of the world. Our country has been playing an important role in promoting this co-operation.

Most of our imports from the industrialized countries are connected with high technology. Here we have a big disadvantage. This is mainly because of the way economic relations between the industrialized countries and the rest of the world have developed over the past 150 years or so. The prices of our exports have been kept low while our high technology imports are priced very high. This is a situation that we and other developing countries do not like and have been trying to overcome with the help of the United Nations and other international organizations. However, we try not to lag behind in the area of high technology and try to work out mutually beneficial arrangements with other countries. Our main asset in this regard is the availability of a large scientific and technical manpower. Some of our best technologists and scientists sometimes migrate to the richer countries of the world. They do this for their professional growth and, of course, for more money. We often refer to this as 'brain drain'.

One of our more expensive imports is petroleum. In spite of the quite significant expansion of petroleum extraction and refining capacity, we still do not produce enough oil to meet our growing requirements. The import bill on oil goes on rising. During the past 20 years, the price of petrol in our country has gone up by more than ten times. Any increase in the price

of petrol means an increase in the price of everything else. Increase in prices of essential goods and transport makes life difficult and this has been happening for as long as we remember.

Our favourites

Dress

How do we like to dress? As well as we can, perhaps. That sounds like a reasonable enough answer. But it may not give you a clear picture of what we actually wear in and out of school. You see, some schools insist on our wearing the prescribed uniform, which is usually a white shirt and green or blue trousers for boys. In a few schools in big cities, a necktie is also a compulsory part of the uniform. Children in lower grades are allowed to wear shorts instead of trousers. Girls in lower and higher grades wear skirts with a white top, and if it is one of the few schools mentioned above, there is no escaping the necktie even for them. Winter brings in its wake the woollen version of uniforms — a jacket, a sweater and trousers for boys, and a skirt, a sweater and long socks for girls. *Salwar kameez* (a kind of pleated trousers and shirt) is also a common uniform for girls.

A dancer dressed in a sari

What some of us living in metropolitan cities want to wear according to our choice is, in fact, jeans, baggy trousers and T-shirts. Modern western clothes, as can be seen in films and advertisements on television and in magazines, have taken our imagination by storm, and there

is a perceptible preference for the Western outfit among us these days. Both girls and boys favour the same clothes but girls are equally interested in *salwar kameez*. On festive occasions, though, they wear *ghagra* (a long and loose shirt with frills and pleats) and *choli* (blouse with long sleeves, often brocaded with floral designs) and *saris*.

Food

Food that can be called essentially Indian is generally spicy, a little greasy but rather 'tasty'. Be they vegetarian or non-vegetarian, Indian dishes are not strictly a conscientious physician's delight for the simple reason that they contain a good deal of fat and spices. For those of us who are non-vegetarian, chicken curry, chicken tandoori, *mutton korma*, *biryani* and *seekh kabab* top the list of favourite dishes. Vegetarians get justifiably ecstatic over such dishes as vegetable curries, *dal* (lentils) and *achar* (pickles). *Chapati* and plain rice are common to both categories. An important part of a complete meal is the sweet dish, which can be *kheer* (a sort of rice and milk pudding) or *gajar ka halwa* (grated carrots cooked in milk with sugar and garnished with raisins, cashew nuts, almonds, etc.) in winter, and almost anything sweet in summer.

Food in north India is very different from the south Indian bill of fare. *Idli*, *dosa*, *vada*, rice and *sambhar*, *uthappam*, etc., are favourite south Indian dishes. They are widely and genuinely enjoyed in the rest of the country also. An ordinary south Indian meal is mainly rice and *sambhar*, vegetables and Indian pickles; the last item is invariably rice mixed with plain *curds* (yoghurt) and salt to taste. *Idli*, *dosa* and *vada* can be had for breakfast or as snacks in the afternoon.

Taken together, the two permanent components of an Indian meal are rice and wheat. *Chapatis*, made of kneaded whole wheat flour and cooked on a heated circular iron plate, are favoured in the north. In the south, rice — either boiled or ground and made into other items — is preferred. Other items of a meal are scores of seasonal vegetables available in a particular region.

Fish is popular food in coastal areas. In eastern India, especially Bengal, dozens of varieties of fish can be had. Some people in these areas are in fact fussy about the kind of fish they want to eat.

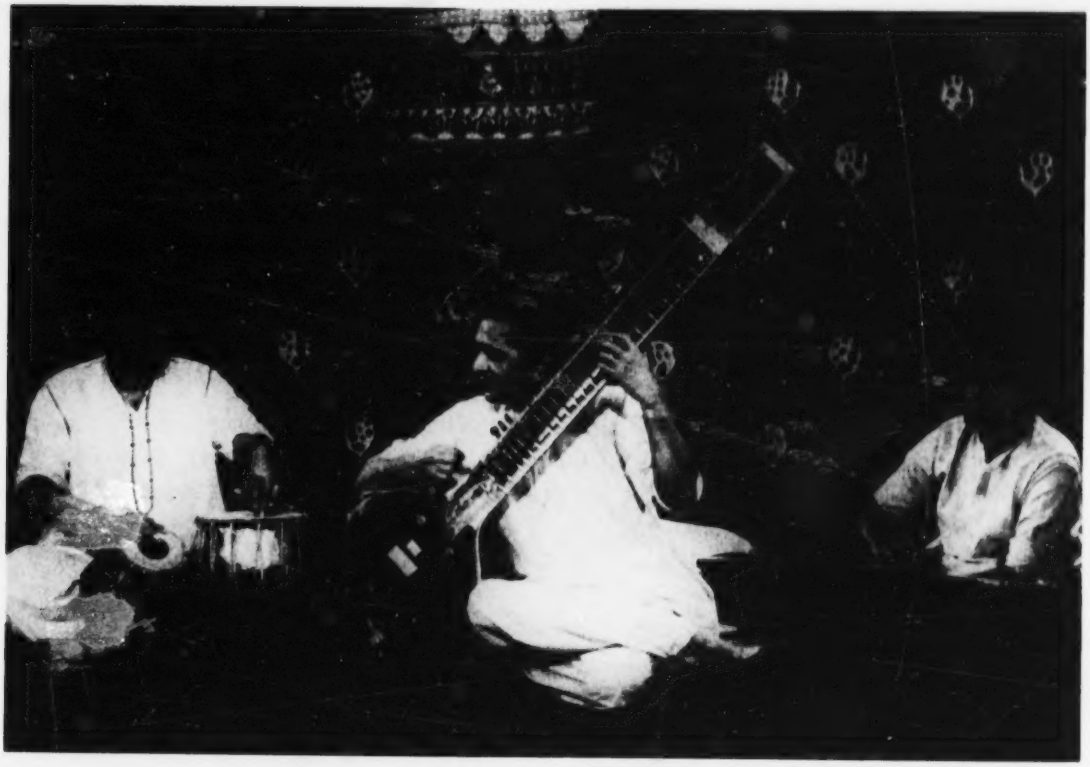
In metropolitan cities, Chinese food is very popular. It is easy to find restaurants called Nanking, Hong Kong, Chopsticks, The Dragon, etc. in almost all important Indian cities. Connoisseurs are of the view that Chinese food in India has been sufficiently Indianized to suit the local taste-buds, but we have no means of checking the truth of this statement until, of course, we get a chance to taste real Chinese food.

It seems fairly certain to us that food will not be a problem to a tourist in India. There is such a variety of type and taste that all palates without distinction of colour and configuration are sure to feel gratified eventually.

Music and singers

Our country has a rich and ancient tradition of both vocal and instrumental classical music, but unfortunately we youngsters are by and large prone to partiality towards popular film music. It is an embarrassing confession to make but we think it is worthwhile making it: we prefer 'good' film songs to *khayal* and *thumri*, which are two important classical styles of singing. A racy

dhun (tune) played on the electric guitar moves us quicker than a long drawn out sitar or sarod recital. We believe that listening to classical music and enjoying it requires exposure, training and time. A few of us may be genuinely interested in classical masters such as Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Bhimsen Joshi, Balamurali Krishna, Jesudas and M.S. Subbalakshmi among vocalists and V.G. Jog, Chitti Babu, Ravi Shankar and Amjad Ali Khan among instrumentalists. But many will unhesitatingly vote for Mohammad Rafi, Lata Mangeshkar, Mukesh, P. Sushila, S. Janaki, S.P. Balasubramaniam, Kishore Kumar and Asha Bhonsle.



Sitar recital by Pandit Ravi Shankar

However, in all fairness to some of our peers in southern and eastern parts of the country in particular, we must point out that the old tradition of learning music has not really disappeared, but continues to be in force as a living tradition. Boys and girls go to special schools to learn to sing, dance and play musical instruments. Sometimes private tutors are engaged to give children lessons in dance and music at home. There are stories of grown-ups who on a sudden artistic impulse gave up lucrative careers to join an *Ustad's* (teacher's) family to be able to live with music, as it were, night and day.

Some of us in the metropolitan cities are fond of Western music. Michael Jackson, Tracy Chapman and Tina Turner are among the top favourites. Jazz, both fast and slow, is also a hot

favourite, and famous groups such as the old Beatles, Fine Young Cannibals and Abba continue to inspire us. There are, of course, some among us who prefer Western classical to pop.

If you want to be introduced to Indian classical music, you should listen to both Hindustani and Carnatic styles. You should also try the vocal as well as the instrumental variety. Then there is a vast fund of semi-classical and popular film music. And if you happen to move in the rural parts of the country, you will get the exquisite taste of our rich folk music. Words and tunes of those songs may be a few centuries old but they still sound fresh and charming as if they were composed in the recent past.

Ghazal singing has also become very popular during the last decade. It is enjoyable for its music as well as its beautiful poetry. It can be equated neither with film music nor with classical music. It stands midway between both, and is enjoyed by modernists and purists alike. The late Begum Akhtar, Jagjit Singh and Chitra Singh, Chandan Das, Anoop Jalota and Pankaj Udhas are distinguished *ghazal* singers in India. Mehdi Hasan and Ghulam Ali of Pakistan are also greatly appreciated throughout the country.

Poets and writers

There are a number of distinguished poets in all Indian languages. The choice of our favourite poets will, therefore, depend upon the language we speak and the region we belong to. However, there are also a number of important poets who cut across the regional boundaries and are read, enjoyed and admired all over the country and even abroad. Some of them are Rabindranath Tagore (Bengali), Sarojini Naidu (English), Harivansh Rai Bacchan (Hindi), Mohammad Iqbal (Urdu), Subrahmania Bharati (Tamil) and Faiz Ahmed Faiz (Urdu).

Sarojini Naidu wrote all her poems in English and many of them are now among famous anthology pieces. Jai Shankar Prasad and Iqbal are distinguished poets in Hindi and Urdu respectively. Iqbal's poem 'Sare Jehan Se Accha ...' is one of our national songs. Subrahmania Bharati is a distinguished nationalist Tamil poet. Faiz is another important poet whose name is linked up with the Progressive Movement in modern Urdu literature. Bankim Chandra Chatterji is a significant novelist in Bengali. He composed the famous 'Vande Mataram' song also. Prem Chand is our most well-known short story writer and novelist in Hindi.

We are fond of English and American poets such as Shakespeare, Browning, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman. We have read their poems in our school books and we remember most of the lines. All these poets are inextricably tied up with the tradition of English teaching in our country.

Given below is a poem by Tagore.

(Original Bengali version)

Chita jetha bhoyshunya, uccha jetha shir,
Gyan jetha mukta, jetha griher prachir
Apan prangantale dibasasharbaree
Basudhare rakhe nai khanda kshudra kari,
Jetha bakya hridayer utsamukh hote
Ucchasiya uthe, jetha nirbaritasrote
Deshey deshey dishey dishey karmadhara dhay

Ajasra sahasrabidha charitarthatay -
Jetha tucchha acharer marubalurashi
Bicharer srotahpath phelenai grasi,
Paurushere kareni shatadha; nitya jetha
Tumi sarba karma chinta anander neta -
Nija haste nirday aghat kari pitah,
Bharatere sei swarge karo jagarita.

(Translation into English)

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow
domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the
dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever widening thought
and action -
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Legends

The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are the two great epics of India which were composed over 2,000 years ago. The *Ramayana* tells the story of Rama who, along with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana, had to go into exile for 14 years. He fought against Ravana, the king of Lanka, who had abducted Sita, brought Sita back and returned to his kingdom after the end of his period of exile. The theme of the epic symbolizes the victory of righteousness over evil. The epic also extols the values of the son's unquestioned obedience to his father, the wife's devotion to her husband and the younger brother's loyalty to his elder brother. The main story of the *Mahabharata* is about the conflict between two groups of cousins, the Kauravas and the Pandavas. The war which followed ended in the defeat of the Kauravas who represented the forces of evil. The *Bhagvadagita*, a major scripture of the Hindus, is a part of the *Mahabharata*. It teaches that person must perform the duties assigned to him without any desire for reward. These two works are also full of legends besides the main story.

Another famous ancient work is *Silappadikaram* (The Story of the Anklet). In this story Kannagi condemns to destruction the city of Madurai whose king had unjustly killed her husband.

Then there is a series of Tamil stories about a character called Tenali Rama, and how he, a commoner, rose to peaks of eminence and popularity among the royalty with his wit and sheer brilliance of mind. Love stories such as *Laila Majnoon*, *Heer Ranjha* and *Sheerin Farhad* are also very popular. 'Panchtantra' is another significant series of Indian fables read and admired by all of us.

'Three women', a painting by Jamini Roy

Authors, books and comic strips

Some of our favourite authors are Prem Chand, Sarojini Naidu and Jawaharlal Nehru. Among the foreign authors, we enjoy reading books by Dickens, Agatha Christie and Issac Asimov.

Among English comic strips, which appear in English-language magazines and newspapers, Dennis the Menace and Mandrake are our favourites. 'Amar Chitra Katha' (Immortal Illustrated Stories) is the general title of a series of comic books which is brought out from Bombay in many Indian languages. This series is greatly enjoyed by many of us.

Films and television serials

The Indian film industry is a prolific one. We are told it is second to none in film production. On an average, about a thousand films are produced every year in various Indian languages. V. Shantaram, Raj Kapoor, K. Balachander, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Mrinal Sen and A. Nageswara Rao are among the well-known film-makers of our country. Raj Kapoor's film *Awara* (The Tramp), made over 35 years ago, is still a craze. *Sholay*, produced more than a decade ago, was a hot favourite and continues to attract crowds even today. Some recent films which are popular are *Khuda Gawaha*, *Main ne Pyar Kiya*, *Pushpak Viman* and *Sagara Sangam*. Among foreign films, old classics such as *Gone with the Wind*, *War and Peace*, *My Fair Lady*, *Sound of Music*, etc., are still popular. *Mississippi Burning* is a recent American film which has been widely viewed in metropolitan towns.

Satyajit Ray is the most distinguished name in the history of Indian cinema. He is rated as one of the best film directors in the world. His recent film *Ganashatru*, an adaptation of a play by Ibsen, deals with a doctor's fight against superstition. Most of his films are in Bengali. His very first film *Pather Panchali* made over 35 years ago won him international fame. He was awarded an Oscar for his contribution to the art of cinema and the Bharat Ratna, India's highest honour. Besides being a director of films, Satyajit Ray was an important writer and illustrator of children's stories. He passed away in April 1992.

Television is the most popular form of public entertainment in most parts of the country these days. It helps people keep indoors in the evening and on Sundays so much so that owners of cinema houses have felt very disturbed over it. Home video is active and local video parlours have a roaring business.

Doordarshan, that is what the Indian television is called, has featured a number of popular serials. *The World this Week*, a television news-magazine, both national and international, is our favourite. *The Sword of Tipu Sultan*, a popular serial televised not long ago, tells the story of an eighteenth century Indian ruler who fought very valiantly against the British. A serial which is currently being telecast is *Chanakya*. Chanakya was the author of the *Arathasastra*, the famous ancient Indian work on statecraft. He is also believed to have played a crucial role in the founding of the first empire in India in the fourth century BC

VI. WORLD CONCERNS

The world in the twentieth century has become 'integrated in a way that it had never been before'. Most of the problems that people in any part of the world face today are the common concern of the world as a whole. Never before have the peoples of the world shared a common destiny as they do now.

The most important concern, obviously, is the survival of the world itself. We are told by scientists and by governments themselves — those who are responsible for this — that the world has so many weapons of mass destruction that all life can be annihilated many times over. We also read in our history books that there have been occasions in the past few decades when the world in fact was on the brink of disaster. More recently, the cold war which carried the seeds of total destruction, has, everyone tells us, ended. But last year itself, there was 'hot' war. During that war, there was talk by responsible people that the use of chemical, biological and even nuclear weapons could not be ruled out. We think that the future of humanity is still not secure. It will be secure only when all the weapons of mass annihilation are destroyed. Every other question is secondary.

The second important question is one of inequality between nations and of development. We live in a world which is extremely unequal and unjust. In the Charter of the United Nations we read about the determination of the peoples of the United Nations 'to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war' and to promote 'the economic and social advancement of all peoples'. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights lays stress, among others, on economic and social rights including the right to work, the right to social security, the right to an income consistent with a life of human dignity, the right to rest and leisure, and the right to education. We do not think that the progress that has been made in realizing these objectives has been remarkable. A majority of the world still lies in conditions of extreme misery. In our own country, about half the population is illiterate. We think that this is not only an internal problem of each country; it has an international dimension. It seems to us that the misery of what is now called the Third World or the South is not completely unrelated to the prosperity of the First World. There have been some discussions on the New International Economic Order and the unequal nature of economic relations between the Third World countries and the industrialized countries. The question of economic and social rights concerns us in India and other similar countries most directly. But we like to believe that it is a matter of concern to others also because about 70 per cent of the human race is directly affected by this. One obvious solution which everyone has been talking about is disarmament and making available vast amounts of funds that it would release for purposes of development. There is also a need for what is called 'restructuring' of economic relations between countries on the basis of equality.

The third major concern is environment and, connected with it, population. The world's natural resources are, obviously, not unlimited. These resources are being increasingly depleted, much more by the richer countries than the others. Besides depleting natural resources, the way industrialization has taken place, it has led to the pollution of the air and water, and the extinction of many forms of life. In our country, as in many others, forested areas have diminished. We had a terrible tragedy in Bhopal, one of our old cities, where the leakage of poisonous gas from a chemical plant set up by a big multinational corporation killed thousands of people. Many scientists and others have been writing about all these problems but we are not sure if anything really substantial has been done in terms of a 'wise' use of natural

resources and making the process of economic development free from pollution The problem of population increase is also connected with this. Like the other problems, this one also affects us and others like us more directly. Our population now is about 840 million. It was less than half of this 40 years ago. It will reach about 1,000 million, or one billion, in a few years' time. We are told that by the time we reach the age of 60, world population would have risen from the present 5.8 billion to about 12 billion. Will our planet be able to carry this 'burden'? Here again, most of the increase will take place in countries which are already impoverished. Faster economic development, better standards of living, education for everyone and various other things which make life worth living perhaps will help in reversing this trend.

All these problems are interrelated and to us appear to be not impossible to solve. Perhaps we do not understand the complexities of these problems and the reasons why nothing very impressive is being done to solve them. It would be presumptuous on our part to suggest any solutions. Everyone must be worried about them as we are. We think that there are no ways other than *international* efforts in solving them. This would require us to be less parochial in our outlook and perhaps less preoccupied with ourselves.

The future

Our parents and teachers tell us, and we believe them too, that we are the future of the country. It is a gratifying situation to be in, to feel important so to say, and yet it worries us to think what specific role each of us can possibly play in shaping the country and the world in the future.

What are our aspirations for the future? Frankly, we think it is too early to surmise or predict the shape of things to come. We do have aspirations as to jobs and careers. We would like to have 'good' jobs as doctors, engineers, scientists, computer experts, teachers, artists, etc. A good job, we think, is one which gives us a chance to do the work that is consistent with our training and aptitude on the one hand, and which fetches us enough money every month on the other. Thus, a happy combination of productivity and economic well-being is our idea of being gainfully employed.

But it is by no means as easy to be gainfully employed as it seems at first sight. The job situation being what it is today and the number of aspirants being so large, it is only the very qualified or the lucky ones who make the grade finally. There is plenty of competition in our life as students; there is going to be even more of it in the matter of getting suitable jobs in future. We can only hope that most of us will successfully complete our studies and get good jobs in the end. For the time being, we should work hard, be earnest of purpose, modest of ambition and positively optimistic of future. Let us also hope that whatever we finally achieve in terms of personal success and advancement will be of use to our country in particular and to the world in general.

Our life-style will depend upon our economic status. As far as preferences are concerned, we would like to live a comfortable life. Many of us would prefer to live in urban surroundings. We would like to own a flat and a car or a scooter, and have our house fitted with such modern gadgets as render day-to-day life easy, enjoyable and free from drudgery. In our leisure hours, we would like to read interesting books, watch films, listen to music and in general be rid of tension and care.

The convention in our country has always been, and still is, that the choice of a life partner is made not by the person concerned but by his/her parents and grandparents. Many

people do make their own choices but in most cases it is the parents who decide. In some cases, we indicate our choice directly or indirectly and the parents do the rest, acting as if it was their selection. Most of us feel that we should have the freedom to choose our life partners ourselves and that the parents should bless us on our wedding.

Most of us would like to have a small family. When we look around, we notice that many of our personal as well as national problems are due to the size of our population. Our government lays a lot of emphasis on population control, and we on our part have begun to realize that an immediate curb on population growth is a prerequisite to economic prosperity. Hence our preference for a small family.

A small family in India does not necessarily mean only husband, wife and two children. It also means parents and grandparents. Even a small family (small in terms of the number of children) has a couple of 'elders' staying with it. And we like it too. Old age, and the experience that goes with it, is entitled to due respect and affection, and one cannot show it better than by looking after one's parents and grandparents. They need us in their old age as much as we needed them in our infancy and later.

We are a secular and democratic country according to our Constitution. We visualize a future where secularism and democracy and social justice will have become a matter of habit rather than of law — a society whose members are bound each to each by fellow-feeling and mutual respect and not a heterogeneous group whose members consider caste and creed more sacred than primary human emotions and needs; a society, as Tagore said, 'where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit'. We are a peace-loving nation and we want peace to prevail in the world.

The world, as it appears today, is not a cheerful place. There is an unhealthy race for power and political hegemony. There is also a tendency to be self-centred, powerful and cunning on the part of nations of the world. The powerful ones are becoming more powerful and menacing while the weaker ones either fall by the wayside or limp along. A time should surely come when this rat-race ends and the planet earth becomes a safe haven for all who are born on it.

And lastly, what we expect from science and technology is this: they should be harnessed to the cause of betterment of life. They should not be seen as tools of power in the hands of a few but as a system of devices to promote human welfare and improvement of the quality of life in general. In no case should science and technology be allowed to harm nature, its beauty and balance.

We want our green pastures and our forests, our flora and fauna, intact. We want birds to chirp and to build their nests in trees. We want fish to continue to swim in rivers and seas, and we want rains to come down to cool the parched earth. Science and technology should help us maintain the balance and beauty of nature rather than destroy it and help us offset the damage caused by natural disasters which still plague some of our fellow-beings in the world.

The future is unpredictable, but it is related to the happenings of the past and the present. We have no control now over what happened in the past; we can yet improve the present so that the future is as glorious as we would like it to be.